



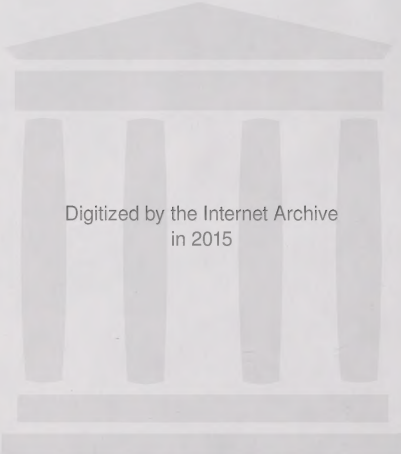


BX 5455 .W5 v.1

Whately, Richard, 1787-1863.

The use and abuse of party  
feeling in matters of





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015



THE USE AND ABUSE  
OF  
PARTY FEELING  
IN MATTERS OF RELIGION,  
CONSIDERED IN  
EIGHT SERMONS PREACHED BEFORE THE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,  
IN THE YEAR MDCCCXXII.  
AT  
THE BAMPTON LECTURE:  
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
FIVE SERMONS  
PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,  
AND  
A DISCOURSE BY ARCHBISHOP KING,  
With Notes and Appendix.

---

BY RICHARD WHATELY, D.D.  
ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

---

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:  
B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.  
1833.

LONDON :

---

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.

TO

EDWARD COPLESTON, D.D.

PROVOST OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AS A TESTIMONY OF AFFECTIONATE RESPECT,

AND

AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE,

FOR THE INESTIMABLE ADVANTAGES OF HIS INSTRUCTION,

AND OF HIS FRIENDSHIP,

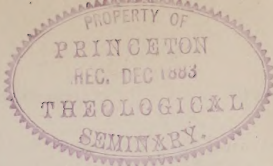
*THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED*

BY HIS FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED

FRIEND AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.





## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

---

*To the present edition of these Lectures I have subjoined, besides five other Sermons preached before the University, a Discourse by Dr. King, formerly Archbishop of Dublin, with Notes and Appendix. The principles maintained, and the temper recommended, in that Discourse, tend so much towards the attainment of the objects proposed in these Lectures, that the Reader will I trust see a sufficient reason for subjoining it to them.*

*Both of these additions are also to be had separate.*



# CONTENTS.

---

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	p. 1
------------------------	------

## LECTURE I.

### NATURE AND USES OF PARTY-FEELING.

1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

*As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body : so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*

I. Nature of party-feeling—consisting in the attachment felt for a Body or society, as such, and in zeal for a common cause.—Tendency of mankind to unite themselves in communities of various kinds—originating in the tendency to afford and to desire sympathy, p. 19, 20 ; importance of this principle—productive of discord as well as of concord . . . . .	p. 24
II. Final causes of this principle—1. increased ardour in a common pursuit—2. cooperation—3. mutual regulation—4. division of labour . . . . .	p. 26
III. Application in religious concerns.—Christian community instituted by our Lord—brotherly love inculcated, p. 33 ; advantages of the Christian communion of saints—increase of zeal, p. 34 ; regular government of the Church, p. 36 ; diversity of offices . . . .	p. 38
IV. Regulation of this principle, p. 41 ; plan of the ensuing lectures . . . . .	p. 45

## LECTURE II.

## PARTY-SPIRIT.

JAMES iii. 14 — 17.

*If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

- I. Character of party-spirit. 1. Preference of the means to the end, p. 50.—Causes of this. Regulations and institutions which are valuable only for the sake of preserving the society, p. 53; distinctive marks, p. 53. 2. Over-readiness to form parties. 3. Uncandid partiality, p. 57. II. Faults connected with party-feeling—1. Vanity and ambition, p. 60. 2. Love of novelty, p. 61. 3. Love of controversy, p. 61. 4. Pride and revengefulness, p. 63. III. Effects of party-spirit—1. Extinction of charity, p. 65. 2. Scandal to the cause of truth, p. 67. 3. Propagation of error . . . . . p. 68
- IV. Objection alleged. Necessity of parties, p. 74. Answer to the objection, p. 75. Utility of general rules . . . p. 78

## LECTURE III.

## A CARNAL MIND THE CAUSE OF DIVISIONS.

1 COR. iii. 3.

*Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

Necessity of a Christian temper for preventing the evils of party-spirit, p. 84. 1. Evil passions, which lead to



party-spirit, how to be checked. 1. Desire of taking the lead, p. 84. 2. Love of novelty to be kept under control, p. 87. 3. Restraint of a disputatious spirit, p. 94. 4. Love of triumph to be repressed, p. 96.	
II. Rules for keeping in check the spirit of party.	
1. Preference of the means to the end to be guarded against, p. 98. 2. Cautions against the tendency to separate into parties, p. 103. 3. And against uncharitable bigotry . . . . .	p. 106

## LECTURE IV.

## ALLOWABLE DIFFERENCE AMONG CHRISTIANS.

## ROM. xiv. 13.

*Let us not therefore judge one another any more : but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*

Judgment and treatment of those who really or apparently differ from us, without being at all or in any high degree blameable, p. 113. I. Cautions against misunderstanding another's meaning, p. 114 ; a complete adoption of the sentiments of any party, not to be inferred from a partial coincidence, p. 115 ; false conclusions from another's principles not to be forced upon him, p. 120. II. Allowance to be made for the weakness of our brethren, p. 122 ; gradual instruction of those who are babes in Christ, 127. III. Allowances to be made for differences of natural temperament or acquired taste, p. 131 ; some such differences allowable and unavoidable, p. 133 ; characteristic diversity of style in the inspired writers, p. 134 ; our own peculiarities to be kept within due bounds, and those of others viewed with candour . . . . . p. 141

## LECTURE V.

## CHRISTIAN CONDUCT TOWARDS OPPONENTS.

2 TIM. ii. 24, 25.

*The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

Treatment of those who are guilty either of heresy or schism, p. 144. I. Party-spirit to be expected in our opponents, p. 149 ; errors and maintainers of error to be opposed separately rather than collectively, p. 150 ; differences in doctrine to be extenuated rather than aggravated, p. 154. II. Bitterness of spirit how to be encountered. Duty of " gentleness and patience with all men," p. 156. Decided and unqualified condemnation of offenders by our Lord and his Apostles, not to be too closely imitated by us, p. 158 ; bitterness in our own party to be censured, p. 158 ; the pride of our opponents not to be unnecessarily wounded, p. 159. III. Controversial eagerness in our opponents to be expected, p. 164 ; rashness and imprudence in controversy to be guarded against, p. 166 ; means to be used for repressing an excessive prevalence of controversy. 1. Some errors to be left unnoticed, p. 169. 2. A didactic rather than a polemical style to be adopted, p. 172. 3. An erroneous system not to be combated in detail, but as a whole. 4. Distinction between such reasoning as is calculated to reclaim those who are in error, and such as is intended to warn others against it . . . . . p. 177

## LECTURE VI.

## FOOLISH AND UNLEARNED QUESTIONS AVOID.

2 TIM. ii. 23.

*Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do  
gender strife.*

Recapitulation of the preceding, and outline of the following discourses . . . . . p. 181

- I. Cautions respecting the subject-matter of our discussions, p. 183. 1. Presumptuous inquiries, and attempts at explanation of inscrutable mysteries, p. 184; mistake of expecting a distinct knowledge of whatever is revealed, p. 188; familiar acquaintance with terms apt to be confounded with accurate knowledge of things, p. 191. 2. Minute and insignificant questions, p. 196. 3. Undue attention to speculative questions, p. 198. II. Cautions respecting the language of religious discussions, p. 201. 1. Ambiguity of terms, p. 202; fatalism and free-will, p. 203; uses of the word Person, p. 204; controversies concerning regeneration, p. 204. 2. Undue importance attached to forms of expression, p. 206; utility of varying the analogous terms employed, p. 206. 3. The fixed phraseology of a party to be avoided . . . . p. 208

## LECTURE VII.

## CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO DISSENTERS.

COL. iv. 5.

*Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.*

Existence of schism one of the appointed trials of Christians, p. 212; the laity as well as the Clergy bound to oppose schism . . . . . p. 217

- I. Duty of adorning and recommending the Church we belong to by an exemplary life, p. 220 ; fallaciousness of forming any judgment respecting our Church from the conduct of some of her nominal members, p. 222 ; II. Duty of zeal in the propagation of truth and refutation of error, p. 226 ; occasional dissent considered, p. 228 ; utility of indirect opposition to sectaries, p. 231 ; importance of supplying the want of places of worship, p. 233. III. Duty of conciliation, p. 238 ; Christ's kingdom not of this world—hence we are neither to overlook the sinfulness of schism because the law does wisely in affording it toleration, p. 239—nor to resort to any secular means of producing conformity . . . . . p. 241

## LECTURE VIII.

### DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH.

1 COR. i. 12, 13.

*Every one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided ?*

- Neither heretical opinions nor separation from the Church, but merely internal disunion censured by the Apostle in this passage, p. 244 ; advantages of a religious society sufficiently secured in the English Church, p. 246 ; advantages of our Liturgy as a standing monitor, p. 247 ; mischievous consequences of forming parties within the Church . . . . . p. 249
- I. Rules for preventing or mitigating the spirit of party within the Church, p. 253. 1. Caution against extremes, p. 254 ; moderation of St. Paul, p. 256. 2. Importance of correctly inculcating such doctrines as have

- been most abused, p. 257. 3. Allowances to be made for differences of taste and temper, p. 259. 4. Imputation of bad motives to be avoided, p. 260. 5. The language of a party to be avoided, p. 262—but the terms to be employed in their ordinary and unappropriated sense, p. 263. 6. A similar caution to be observed with respect to the names of parties. II. Two opposite classes of errors to be guarded against, p. 268.
1. Injudicious introduction of religious conversation couched in certain fixed forms of expression, p. 269 ; indifference as to the sin of schism, p. 270 ; injudicious austerity, p. 270 ; tendency to presumptuous explanation and to exclusively elementary preaching, p. 271.
  2. Opposite faults—aversion to religious conversation—dread of being “righteous” overmuch—preference of orthodoxy to vital religion, p. 273 ; Defective inculcation of the great doctrines of the Gospel, 274 ; all parties to be opposed as parties . . . . . p. 275
- III. Difficulties and encouragements in pursuing the course recommended, p. 276. 1. Liability to unfriendly suspicion from each party, p. 277 ; loss of celebrity, p. 278. 2. Patient zeal may be expected to wear out obloquy and suspicion, p. 279 ; support to be hoped for from the candid and judicious on both sides, p. 279 ; we are to be encouraged by the hope of approbation and final reward from Him who seeth in secret . . . . . p. 280
-

## SERMON I.

[Preached before the University, Jan. 30, 1821.]

## THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO RULERS.

## HEB. xii. 11.

*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.*

- Office of the preacher, not to settle disputable points of history, but to draw useful instructions from acknowledged facts . . . . . p. 283
- I. *Gratitude* for our deliverances . . . . . p. 286
- II. Christian duty of *obedience* to rulers. This duty is virtually destroyed by the doctrine of the Social Compact, p. 290 ; governors responsible for the use of their power, but not to their subjects, p. 298 ; errors in the maintainers of this principle which have tended to bring it into disrepute : 1st, that the divine commands apply peculiarly to *kings* ; 2dly, that they extend to *illegal* exercise of power ; 3dly, that no allowance is to be made for *extreme cases* . . . . . p. 300
- III. *Moderation* should be learned from the history in question. The intemperately violent, produce opposite results to those they aim at . . . . . p. 306

## SERMON II.

[Preached at the Lent Assizes, Oxford, March 8, 1821.]

## THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS.

## DEUT. xi. 1.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always.*

- I. Human laws, positive as well as moral, entitled to obedience, support, and respect from the Christian, for conscience' sake, p. 320 ; Christians bound to abstain from perversion and abuse of them . . . . p. 333
- II. The law not to be the guide of our conscience : 1st, it omits whatever is not an object of compulsion, and whatever cannot be clearly defined ; 2d, its punishments are not proportioned to the moral guilt of offences ; 3d, it looks only to the outward action, not to the heart . . . . . p. 335

## SERMON III.

[Preached before the University, May 29, 1822, and republished in 1831.]

## NATIONAL BLESSINGS AND JUDGMENTS.

## DEUT. xxx. 9, 10.

*The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers :*

*If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments.*

Temporal advantages and disadvantages *generally*, but not invariably, awarded both to States and individuals according to their good or ill desert, p. 346 ; this award

- regular and invariable, with respect to the Israelites under the Mosaic law, p. 347 ; opinion of some, that the same system extends to *nations* universally, from their having no future retribution to expect, p. 348, I. Objection to this opinion—States not being *persons*, are incapable of reward or punishment . . . . p. 352
- II. Explanation of the system pursued with respect to the Jews as a nation ; they were designed to furnish a specimen or representation of God's moral government, p. 354 ; importance of rightly understanding the Old Testament with a view to the New . . . . p. 359
- III. States appear to be more regularly rewarded and punished in this world than individuals : 1st, from their indefinite duration of existence ; 2d, from the difficulty of determining what *are* national goods and evils . . . . . p. 365
- Appendix added to the second edition . . . . . p. 372

## SERMON IV.

[Preached before the University, Whitsunday, 1821.]

### USE OF HUMAN LEARNING IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

#### 1 COR. ii. 4.

*My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

- I. Human learning and eloquence superseded by the gift of tongues, and other miraculous powers . . . . p. 383
- II. These being now withdrawn, the pursuit of such studies becomes essential to Christian ministers, p. 389 ; reasons for first bestowing and then withdrawing these miraculous gifts—analogy to the case of the Israelites, p. 392



- III. Human studies, to be sanctified, 1st, by their dedication to religious uses, p. 399 ; 2d, by being kept in due subordination to religion, p. 404 ; 3d, by being personally and practically applied, p. 405 ; and, 4th, by constant reliance on the divine blessing . . . p. 409

## SERMON V.

[Preached before the University, Nov. 5, 1821.]

### CHRIST THE ONLY PRIEST UNDER THE GOSPEL.

#### HEB. vii. 24—27.

*This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens ; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's : for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

Discussion of political questions relative to Roman Catholics unsuitable to the preacher, p. 416. One of the chief abuses of the Greek and Romish Churches the change of the Christian ministry into a different kind of office from that which the Apostles instituted . . . p. 418

- I. The word Priest used to answer both to ἱερεὺς and to Πρεσβύτερος, which correspond to two distinct offices, p. 418 ; the former an offerer of sacrifice, and mediator, p. 421 ; the latter not, p. 422 ; no priest in the former sense under the Gospel, except Christ . . . p. 426

II. Office of the Christian Priest or Presbyter . . .	p. 426
III. Errors arising from overlooking the above distinction ; 1st, Complaints of priestcraft, not applicable against our religion, p. 432. 2dly, Corruptions in the Romish Church springing from the change of <i>Πρεσβύτερος</i> into <i>Ἱερεὺς</i> , p. 441. 3dly, Disposition to attempt serving God by proxy, and substituting the religion of the priest for that for the people . . . . .	p. 444
INTRODUCTION TO ARCHBISHOP KING'S DISCOURSE .	p. 453
DISCOURSE ON PREDESTINATION, &c. . . . .	p. 465
APPENDIX, No. I. . . . .	p. 523
No. II. . . . .	p. 543

BAMPTON LECTURES.



## INTRODUCTION.

---

TO oppose the progress of false doctrines and of schism was among the principal objects proposed by the Founder of these lectures. It is undoubtedly necessary for this purpose that the various articles of the orthodox faith, especially such as from time to time may chance to be controverted, should be expounded and maintained; and the duty of Church-union inculcated. But it is perhaps no less necessary, with a view to the same object, that we should be put on our guard against such conduct as may lead *others* into those faults, though we remain free from them ourselves; and that the cause of truth should be, as far as possible, protected from the detriment which it may receive from injudicious friends, as well as from enemies.

Erroneous tenets may be unintentionally aided in their progress, even by those who do not adopt them ; and schisms fostered, by those who do not join in them. To suggest therefore such cautions as may be requisite for avoiding these evils cannot be deemed a superfluous task ; especially, as less attention has been bestowed on this department than on most others ; and as better success may often be hoped for, in preventing a malady, than in curing it.

Having been led, with this view, to attempt a delineation of *Party-spirit*, and the faults of conduct and of temper connected with it, it was of course necessary to characterize that natural and *allowable* feeling of attachment to the Body we belong to, of which Party-spirit is the excess ; lest I should be understood as favouring the contrary extreme, and condemning all social-feeling in religious matters, short of that which extends to the whole of our fellow-creatures.

The principle, whose use and abuse in the concerns of religion forms the subject of the ensuing discussion, can hardly be said to have any well-established and precisely appropriate name in our language ; and is in fact most

commonly denoted by the French expression, “*Esprit de corps* ;” “ Party-spirit” being a term seldom employed but in an unfavourable sense : while “ Social-feeling” again, or “ Philanthropy,” would convey too wide a signification ; the principle in question being a certain *limited social-feeling*, distinct from that which connects together all mankind. That species of the feeling in question which more particularly falls under my present consideration, the Apostles seem to have denoted by a word (*Φιλαδελφία*) which our translators render “ Brotherly-love :” but the use of this last term in that precise signification is not altogether established. I have therefore adopted the term “ *Party-feeling*” for this purpose ; not as completely unexceptionable, but as appearing, on the whole, the best that could be found, without resorting to a foreign language.

The discussion of this subject falls naturally under three heads. I. The *description* of Party-feeling, as to its use, and its abuse : II. The rules and cautions to be observed, *generally*, for securing the advantages, and avoiding the evils,

in question : III. The *application* of these rules to the present state of the Church in this country.

I. The first of these heads forms the subject of the first two discourses ; in which the proper degree, and right direction, of Party-feeling, and also its excess and perversion, are, respectively, treated of.

In the discussion of the former branch, I have endeavoured to characterize generally that principle in our nature which attaches men to any Society or Body of which they may be members ; (which seems to arise from the disposition to afford, and to delight in, mutual sympathy)—to point out the *final causes* for which it was implanted by the great Author of nature, *i. e.* the good purposes to which it is subservient, when well regulated : which are principally, first, increased energy in pursuit of a *common* object ; secondly, regular cooperation ; thirdly, mutual control and regulation ; and fourthly, an advantageous division of labour :—and lastly, to offer some observations on the right employment of it in the Christian Church ; whose Founder, “ knowing what was in Man,”



enlisted the principle in question into the service of his religion.

In proceeding to describe, under the name of Party-spirit, the excesses and misapplications of this principle, I have noticed three faults as most especially characteristic of that spirit: *viz.* first, a disposition to *prefer the means to the end*,—the Body itself, and whatever tends to support and strengthen it,—to the object itself which it originally proposed; secondly, an over-readiness to *form* parties, on insufficient grounds; and thirdly, a narrow-minded and uncandid bigotry. To these are added, as *causes* and concomitants of Party-spirit, first, the desire of taking the lead; secondly, fondness for novelty; thirdly, love of disputation; and fourthly, the Pride which delights in triumph and in insolent revenge. The evil *consequences* of Party-spirit are also noticed: *viz.* first, the extinction of Christian Charity; secondly, Scandal to the cause of Religion; and thirdly, the establishment and propagation of Error; which is the more readily received, in proportion as men are blinded by the spirit of Party.

II. In treating of the next head, *viz.* the rules

to be observed, generally, for avoiding the evils above described, it appeared advisable, for the sake of affording a convenient aid to the memory, to arrange these rules under four heads: treating first of those which relate generally to the discipline and regulation of *our own minds*; secondly, of those which concern our *conduct towards others*; thirdly, of those relating to the *subject-matter* on which we may be engaged; and fourthly, of those which regard the *language* we employ.

Accordingly I have endeavoured, in the third lecture, to delineate, and to suggest rules for cultivating and cherishing in ourselves, such dispositions as may most effectually counteract the faults described in the preceding discourse. The third and fourth lectures are devoted to the consideration of those principles which ought to direct our judgment and treatment of *those who differ* from us; whether that difference shall, upon consideration, appear to be innocent and *allowable*, or deserving of *censure*.

With a view to the former of these cases, the principal cautions to be observed are, first, to beware of *mistaking the meaning* of any one, and

imputing to him sentiments which he does not really entertain; secondly, to make due allowance for *weakness* of intellect, backwardness in *knowledge*, and inaptitude for *accurate statements*; and thirdly, to allow also for such differences of natural or acquired *temper and taste* as imply nothing sinful;—differences which even divine inspiration, as we may perceive from the characteristic style of composition of each of the sacred writers, does not entirely do away.

In treating of the rules to be observed in our conduct towards those who appear *culpable*, it was necessary to revert to the same heads which had been before considered *in a different point of view*; viz. in treating of the regulation of *our own* temper. For we must be prepared to find our opponents liable to the same faults which we are to guard against in ourselves; such as, first, party-spirit; secondly, unchristian *bitterness*; and thirdly, fondness for *controversy*; and it should be our study both to counteract, or at least avoid promoting, those faults, and also to take precautions against the ill effects which may result from them. With respect to the last of these three heads especially, several

cautions are suggested against rashly laying ourselves open to the arts of a subtle disputant : and against fostering insignificant heresies by imprudent opposition ; or inflaming the controversial spirit by assuming the *polemical* style, where the *didactic* would be more suitable. And it is recommended to take a *comprehensive* view of any question that may be agitated, instead of being exclusively occupied in answering every cavil that may be brought forward : and carefully to suit the course of argument adopted, to the peculiar object which may be in each case proposed ; whether that be, to *reclaim* those who are tainted with error, or to *warn* others against being seduced by it.

With respect to the subject-matter of the discussions we may be engaged in, the Apostle Paul's precept must be observed, to avoid " foolish and unlearned questions " as gendering strife ; under which head I have placed all such inquiries as are likely to lead to controversy respecting, first, matters too *abstruse* and mysterious for the human faculties to comprehend ; secondly, *minute* and trifling ; or thirdly, altogether *speculative*, and unconnected with practice. And

under the first of these heads, two mistakes are noticed, which have an especial tendency to lead to presumptuous speculation; first, the expectation, oftentimes ill grounded, that *full* and *distinct* notions may be attained of whatever is *revealed* in Scripture; and secondly, the mistake of supposing that we understand more clearly than we do, any thing of which the *name* is very familiar to us.

The cautions suggested with respect to the language employed are, first, to be duly on our guard against the *ambiguity* of terms; secondly, not too rashly to judge of men's doctrines from their phraseology, — insisting too strongly on their employing the same terms with ourselves; and thirdly, to avoid adhering too closely to any such fixed set of expressions as have been made, or are likely to become, the *cant-language* of a *party*; which has a tendency not only to gender “strifes about words,” but also, both to deaden men's attention to the *things* signified, and to lead to *erroneous theories* for explaining the doctrines in question.

III. The third point originally proposed being the application of the principles above laid down

to the existing state of the Christian Church in this Country, this subject naturally divides itself into two branches: the case of Separatists from the Church, and that of adverse parties *within* the Church, requiring, each, a distinct consideration. For in the one case, Party-feeling requires to be wisely *regulated*, and kept within proper bounds; in the other case, it is to be deprecated, and as far as possible *extinguished*, altogether.

In what relates to our conduct towards Dissenters, I have endeavoured to point out the middle course between intolerant bigotry on the one hand, and disregard of the virtue of Christian concord on the other; and have recommended, as the most effectual means of counteracting the prevalence of schism, first, an *Exemplary Life*; secondly, *Zeal* in the inculcation of truth; and thirdly, a *conciliatory* and Christian mildness.

With respect to the internal disunion which exists, or which may at any time be likely to arise, among the members of our Church, I have summed up and applied to the case in question such of the fore-mentioned rules as appeared the most likely to counteract the

Spirit of Party within that Church : adding some cautions against certain opposite extremes which seem at present most prevalent : and concluding with a short sketch of the difficulties which those must be prepared to encounter, who determine to keep clear of the Spirit of Party, and to steer between opposite extremes ; as well as of the encouragements by which they are to be supported.

In the whole of the remarks that have been offered, there is little, I am aware, that can claim the praise of originality, except of *arrangement and application*. But I conceived it would be no unprofitable task, especially in times like the present, to collect into a small compass, and exhibit in an orderly form, a number of such principles of conduct as are most requisite with a view to the counteraction both of Heresies and of unchristian Divisions ; and which, though no one of them can be strictly said to be *unknown*, are yet only to be met with loosely scattered in the works of various authors ; and are, in practice, perpetually overlooked. The utility of copious disquisitions on particular points of doctrine, is not disputed ; but it is hoped that

there may be also no less utility in a collection of such general maxims as are intimately connected with the attainment of truth in *all* matters of doctrine alike, and with the preservation both of Christian Faith and Christian Peace.

In historical illustrations of the matters under discussion, I have been more sparing than some perhaps might deem advisable: but as the necessary limits of the present work would have precluded the possibility of introducing a collection of *many* instances to illustrate each point, (which in fact would have occupied several volumes) so on the other hand, the selection of a *few* such instances, might have been attended with this disadvantage; that since differences of opinion would have existed with respect to each case brought forward, some might have been inclined to doubt the justness of the principle itself laid down, in consequence of their not admitting its applicability in the instance adduced: so that the force of the reasoning might sometimes have been weakened, by its being supposed to *rest* on the examples brought forward by way of illustration. I have therefore thought it better, for the most part, to state



only the general reasonings by which each position is supported ; leaving each of my readers to select for himself, from the numerous and well-known examples that may be found, such as may appear to him to afford the most suitable illustration. And if by this means I shall in any instance have avoided also the risk of giving unnecessary *offence* to any one, I shall have succeeded the more completely in conforming to the principles which I have all along studied to inculcate.





## LECTURE I.

### NATURE AND USES OF PARTY-FEELING.

1 COR. xii. 12, 13.

*As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*

No original and essentially inherent principle of our nature is in itself either mischievous or useless. The maxim, that Nature does nothing in vain, is not more true in the material, than in the moral world. And as each organ of the human body (however liable to become the seat of disease, or to exceed its due proportion) is calculated to promote, in its natural and healthy

state, some beneficial end ; so, in the mind also, whatever mischievous excesses and perversions any principle of action may be liable to, (through our frail and sinful nature,) we may be assured that if it shall appear to *be* really a universal principle of our nature, it will be found, on a careful examination, to have been designed, and to be wisely adapted, to promote (when under due guidance) some good purpose.

The good purposes indeed to which some of our natural propensities tend are so manifest and so important, as sometimes to have drawn off men's attention from the propensities themselves, and led them to regard a desire of those ends as the sole principle of action ; thus, in many cases, mistaking (as has been well expressed) “ the wisdom of God for the wisdom of man<sup>a</sup>,” and overlooking the wise contrivance of his providence in implanting such feelings and desires as lead us (as it were blindly) to the accomplishment of what He sees to be beneficial purposes.

One of the most important of these principles, and one which is not in general sufficiently

<sup>a</sup> Smith's Moral Sentiments.

attended to, is that which binds together the members of any community, class, or party, and renders the Body to which they belong, considered *as* a Body, a distinct object of attachment. Not indeed that this part of our constitution has been by any means overlooked altogether; but it is seldom, if ever, that a comprehensive view of it has been taken: some particular branches of it have been noticed fully, while the wide extent and variety of its operation has been disregarded: and its evil or beneficial effects have been viewed separately, without tracing them up to their source, as modifications of what may be reckoned one common, innate principle of the human heart.

Thus, the soundest among the ancients, while they very wisely pronounced Man to be by nature a social Being, impelled to form communities, not by any consideration of the advantages thence accruing, but by a sort of instinctive tendency, yet confined their attention almost exclusively to the *political* union; which is only one among many which man has a tendency to form. And various writers have made just remarks on the extravagances of party-spirit,

without however perceiving, or at least without pointing out, that these are only the abuses and perversions of a principle, which, being essential to our nature, exists, in a greater or less degree, in all mankind; which is in itself (like all our other propensities) neither virtuous nor vicious; but is calculated, under the control of reason, to lead to important benefits.

That it is not common to take a general view of this principle, in all its various bearings and modifications, is evident from this, that it can hardly be said even to have a *name* in our language. The practical effects of a man's attachment to his country, to his faction, to his fraternity, to his sect, and the like, are so different, both in nature and in importance, that our attention is drawn off from the sameness of the general feeling which is at the bottom of all; and which appears different, chiefly from its being directed to different objects. And it is the same with other principles also: for instance, those who are not at all habituated to the investigation of human nature, are apt to be startled at being told that the principle which actuates the conqueror in subjugating empires,

is essentially the same as may often be seen in a child who is anxious to take the lead in directing the sports of his playfellows ; and that, immensely as the effects differ, the cause in each may rightly be called by the same name, *ambition*.

That principle then which I am now speaking of, that party-feeling, (if I may be allowed to give it such a name, in default of a more precise one,) may be described as a certain limitation of the general social principle which binds together the human species. It consists in the attachment and regard men are disposed to feel towards any class, Body, or association they may belong to, in itself, and towards the fellow-members of the same, *as such*, over and above any personal regard they may have for them individually ; and in a zeal for the prosperity of the society, and for the objects it peculiarly proposes, over and above what is felt for those objects in themselves, and what would be felt for them by each individual, supposing him singly to pursue them. It must be added, that men have a natural tendency to sympathize and unite with those who coincide with them in any

point; and hence are led to *form* these communities or parties, as well as to feel towards those in which they may be placed, that attachment and zeal which have been just mentioned.

Those who delight in analysing the complex principles of our nature, and referring them to their simplest elements, may perhaps without much difficulty trace up that of which we are now speaking, to our natural desire of sympathy, and disposition to afford it. We take a pleasure in meeting with persons with whose situations and sentiments we can sympathize: we are pleased likewise with the idea of their sympathy with us; from which consequently we derive additional ardour also in a common pursuit, and increased confidence in a common opinion: and hence arises a mutual attachment between those among whom this mutual sympathy exists.

Whether however this, or any different theory be adopted; or whether the party-feeling we are speaking of is to be referred to any more simple principles of our nature, of which it is the necessary result, or is to be regarded as itself one of the primary elements, as it were, of the human mind, is a question of no consequence



to our present object: only let its existence and universality be admitted, and its effects referred to it, as their immediate source; not to any calculations of reason, upon views of expediency.

That there *is* such a principle in our nature, as far at least as regards the political union, was, as has been just remarked, strongly maintained by the wisest of the ancient philosophers. Cicero in particular (whose testimony is in this case of the more weight, from his being occupied rather in retailing the most approved doctrines of others, than in giving the results of his own inquiries) makes the desire of uniting in societies an essential characteristic of our nature. He denies that men are led to this, merely with a view to the mutual supply of their wants; for if a man, says he, could command all things needful or desirable for himself by the virtue of a magic wand, he would still covet the social union: and he maintains, that, as bees do not assemble for the purpose of building a honeycomb, but, being congregated by a natural instinct, employ themselves in this joint work, so men also are drawn together by a natural

associating principle, and not, originally, from a mere view to those advantages which result from their union.<sup>b</sup>

But moreover, even in those cases where a coalition of any kind is formed manifestly and distinctly for the sake of promoting some common purpose, still the zeal and the mutual attachment of the persons concerned, is not, even then, to be measured by the value, (*i. e.* the original value,) even in their own eyes, of the advantage proposed. Their being engaged in a common pursuit, is generally found to bind them to each other, and to increase their eagerness for the object pursued, to a degree which even they themselves would never have anticipated. What exertions and what sacrifices have been produced by patriotism (*i. e.* attachment to the *political* community we belong to) is well known. It has often led men to resign cheerfully all personal objects, and even life itself, for the sake of the community; and thus to forego all their own share of those common advantages, for whose sake alone, as some

<sup>b</sup> See Lectures on Political-Economy, Lect. IV.

pretend, the community itself was formed. In this case indeed there is an obligation of duty; the force of which has often, no doubt, had great influence in producing such conduct. But we cannot pronounce a sense of duty to be in general the sole motive, nor, always, even a part of the motive, which leads to these results, if we consider both how little of a general sense of duty has apparently been felt by men who yet have plainly shewn themselves not destitute of patriotism,—how little many of them have been disposed, in any other case, to sacrifice their own to their neighbour's good;—what flagitious actions, in violation of duty, some have perpetrated, with a view to the benefit of their Country;—and lastly, how much of the same zeal and attachment is daily shewn by the members of such factions, sects, or parties, as have *not* that claim upon the conscience. In fact, human conduct altogether would be an inexplicable riddle to any one who should deny or overlook the existence of party-feeling as a distinct, and powerful, and general principle of our nature. Every page of history might teach us, if the experience of what daily passes before our eyes

were not sufficient, how slight an attraction is enough to combine men in parties, for any object, or for no object at all,—how slender a tie will suffice to hold them together,—whether a community of interests, or of situations, or of opinions, (or even the colour of an ornament, as in the celebrated case of the rival parties in the Byzantine circus;) and with what eagerness, often what disproportionate eagerness, men engage in the cause of the party they have espoused. Even when they unite for the sake of some object which they previously had much at heart, what an accession of ardour do they receive from their union! like kindled brands, which, if left to themselves, separately, would be soon extinct, but when thrown together, burst into a blaze.

But to the considerations which have been thus briefly touched upon, we must add this circumstance, that the principle we are speaking of is not only a source of union, but also of division;—of discord, no less than of concord; since it implies in its very nature, hostility to every thing that opposes the interests and objects of the party adopted; a jealous aversion to

every rival party ; and a tendency to subdivide, and separate into fresh parties, upon any point in which a certain number coincide with each other, and differ from the rest. And hence it has had a principal share in producing and keeping up almost all the contests that have ever existed, from the most gigantic wars between nations, down to the most obscure local controversies ; and has even given rise probably to more dissensions between individuals than were ever produced by merely personal feelings. Now if we consider all this, we cannot but admit that of all the principles which actuate the human mind, this is one of the most remarkable, and in its effects most momentous.

It was observed in the opening of this lecture, that every one of our natural propensities is calculated to answer, under the control of reason, some good purpose : and the final cause of the one now under discussion, it is not difficult to perceive. Party-feeling has an evident tendency, under wise management, to promote the objects of the Body, whatever they may be. Whenever (as is often the case) it tends to frustrate those

very objects, *that* is always from some excess, imprudence, or mismanagement ; such as has often occasioned courage to lead to defeat instead of victory.

The object indeed which is proposed by a party may be itself bad ; and then, the party-feeling, or whatever else conduces to the accomplishment of such a purpose, becomes mischievous : but this is to be laid to the account of the depravity of the persons concerned ; and does not prove party-feeling to be itself an evil. For, no one would deny such qualities, for instance, as industry or intrepidity to be in themselves valuable ; though if possessed by an unprincipled man, their effects are injurious. Supposing then the object proposed by a party to be a proper one, (and it is their fault if they propose any that is not) party-feeling, if it conduces to that object, must be allowed to be a useful principle. Now that it has this tendency, is evident even from what has been already said. The strength of any feeling, and the ardour of any pursuit, are heightened by mutual sympathy, and by mutual consciousness of that sympathy ; and men feel encouraged and confirmed in their common belief by a sort

of tacit appeal to each other's authority. Moreover, a party have the advantage of acting in concert, and thereby of cooperating far more effectually than if each acted singly and independently, in pursuit of the very same objects. They may consult together, and jointly form plans for simultaneous exertion ; deriving strength, like the bundle of lances in the well known fable, from mutual support. They have likewise the benefit of mutual control and regulation, so necessary to prevent any individual member from interfering, by his own fault or imprudence, with the common benefit of the Body ; whence arise, in political communities, the advantages of civil government. And lastly, they possess the advantage of a division of labour ; by which each member may have that office assigned him for which he is best qualified, or which, at least, he may the better discharge, from being enabled to confine his attention to it. But indeed, besides this subordinate distribution of offices, the very *formation of societies* for the attainment of any good ends, may be regarded as in itself a kind of beneficial division of labour ; and the tendency to form them, as implanted with a view to that

benefit; since by this means the exertions of each individual, by being limited to a narrower sphere, are bestowed with greater effect. And hence, in the case of the political union, the general prosperity of mankind is better promoted by the judicious exertions of each individual in the service of his own country, than it would be, if this general prosperity were the main and immediate object pursued by each, without any division into separate communities.

Such then being the nature, and such the final causes, of party-feeling, it remains to inquire how far the Christian religion is accommodated to this part of our constitution.

It is a remarkable characteristic of the Gospel, that it aims, at correcting indeed, and elevating, but not, at destroying our nature. Unlike the stoical philosophy, which taught men that they were to eradicate every passion, and live merely by the dictates of reason:—unlike most false religions, which inculcate precepts decidedly unnatural, such as, to renounce society, to abstain from innocent enjoyments, and submit to self-inflicted tortures,—Christianity conforms to our



nature wherever it is not depraved; and thus affords a strong presumption of its having proceeded from Him who “knew what was in man.” And as there is no natural propensity, that is in itself evil, so there is none that in itself is condemned by Christianity; though it seeks to direct all of them to higher objects. Our Lord does not require men to despise applause, and to follow virtue solely for its own sake, without any thought of their conduct being seen and approved; but to seek the praise of their “Father who seeth in secret, and who will reward them openly:” He tells them not, to be indifferent about the future, and improvident; but to lay up “for themselves treasure in heaven,” rather than accumulate the perishable goods of this world: He does not exhort them to root out the feeling of pity, as a weakness, but to minister to the poor and helpless, for his sake; and not to renounce human affections, but to love all mankind, including even their enemies. And instead of exhorting his disciples to lay aside all party-feeling, and labour singly for their own salvation and that of other men generally;—instead of merely leaving a set of doctrines and

precepts, to be adopted and obeyed by each insulated individual who might approve of them, He combined his followers himself into a distinct society, which we term the Church; of which He is himself the head, and all Christians the members; of which He appointed the first governors, who founded, on one common principle, various distinct visible Churches on earth, independent of each other, but harmoniously agreeing in their subjection to the one heavenly Ruler; and which He promised to be with always, even unto the end of the world. This Christian fraternity then,<sup>c</sup> this “communion of

<sup>c</sup> “We are wont to speak of the founding of the Church—the authority of the Church—the various characteristics of the Church—and the like, as if the Church were, originally at least, One Society in all respects. But from the period when the Gospel was planted beyond the precincts of Judæa, this manifestly ceased to be the case. And as Christian societies were formed among people more and more unconnected, and dissimilar in character and circumstances, the difficulty of considering the Church as one society, increases. Still, from the habitual and unreflecting use of this phrase ‘The Church,’ it is no uncommon case to confound the two notions,—and sometimes to speak of the various societies of Christians as *one*, sometimes, as distinct bodies. \* \* \* \* \*

“The Church is undoubtedly *one*; and so is the Human

saints," branching out into several distinct Christian Churches, had a formal institution ; it has a

Race, one ; but not, *as a society*. The Church was, from the first, composed of distinct societies, which were called one, because formed *on common principles*. It is one Society, only in reference to its *future* existence. The circumstances of its having one common Head, Christ,—one Spirit,—one Father,—are points of unity which no more make the Church one Society on Earth, than the circumstance of all men having the same Creator, and being derived from the same Adam, renders the Human Race one Political Community. \* \* \* \* \*

" Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War contains an account of the transactions of two opposed parties, each made up of many distinct communities : on the one side were Democracies, on the other, Oligarchies. Yet precisely the same use is made by the historian of the terms ' the democracy ' and ' the oligarchy ' as we find Scripture adopting with regard to the term ' the Church.' No one is misled by these, so as to suppose the community of Athens one with that of Corcyra ; or the Theban, with the Spartan. When the heathen writer speaks of ' the *democracy* of,' or ' in ' the several democratical states, we naturally understand him to mean distinct societies *formed on similar principles*. And so, doubtless, ought we to interpret the sacred writers, when they, in like manner, make mention of the Church of or in Antioch,—Rome,—Ephesus,—Corinth, &c. \* \* \* \* \*

" The Church is *one* then, not as consisting of one society, but because the various societies or churches were then modelled, and ought still to be so, on the same principles ; and because they enjoy common privileges ; — one Lord — one

solemn initiation, in the sacrament of baptism ;— it has rules of belief and of conduct for its members, in the holy Scriptures ; it has a distinct object, the propagation and preservation of the faith, and the spiritual welfare of its members ;— it has in each separate branch of it on earth, regular governors to watch over its concerns ; and it stands opposed, in spiritual warfare, to the corruptions of unregenerate human nature, and the wiles of Satan, who is called “ the God

Spirit—one Baptism.”—HINDS’S *Rise and Progress of Christianity*, Part III. ch. ii.

The same author shews, in other parts of this valuable work, that when Christian *Unity* or *Oneness* is spoken of in the New Testament, it generally means the Unity of dispensation for the various classes of converts :—that Christianity did not distribute its *privileges in different degrees*, as the former Dispensation did, in respect of the “ Proselyte of the gate”—the “ Proselyte of righteousness,” and the “ Hebrew of Hebrews ;” and again, of the Priests, the Levites, and the Israelites of other tribes ; but that there was to be “ one Faith, one Baptism,” one participation of every privilege, for all nations and for every portion of the Church, as far as the intellectual powers, and the opportunities, of each individual, admit. And as the jealousy of the Jews on this point was the main ground of *irritation* and *enmity* on religious matters, Christians are hence exhorted to preserve the *Unity* (ἐνότητα) of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*. See Eph. iv. 5.

of this world." The limited social-feeling,—the fraternal spirit, which Christ and his Apostles strove to cherish, was not designed indeed to supersede universal philanthropy, but it was manifestly considered by them as a distinct duty from that. When our Lord said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another," He cannot properly be interpreted as recommending general benevolence. The injunction to cultivate that, though undoubtedly a divine precept, could not justly have been designated as a *new* one, since even the heathen, however imperfectly they practised this duty, were by no means ignorant of it. He manifestly had in view the mutual love of Christians *as* such. And in like manner the Apostles, when they exhort us to "*add* to brotherly-kindness, charity,"—to "honour all men, and love the brotherhood,"—"to do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith,"—are evidently drawing a marked distinction between the two virtues, of philanthropy, and the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

Thus did Christianity take advantage of this

associating and coalescing principle of our nature, and enlist it, as it were, into her own service, by giving it a new direction; in order to secure, in the most important of all concerns, those advantages which are the final cause of its being implanted in our minds.

What these advantages are, has been already slightly mentioned. All of them seem to have been proposed and secured, by the embodying of the Christian Churches, each having its own distinct government on earth, and all owning a common allegiance to one Sovereign in Heaven. The increased zeal,—the encouragement,—and the consolation, which men derive from the consciousness that others sympathize in their sentiments, their hopes, and their wishes, seem to have been regarded by the Apostles as of no small importance. Paul especially takes frequent opportunities to remind his converts of their being fellow-members of the Body of Christ,—of his own prayers for them, and sympathy with them, and anxiety for the success of their common cause,—and of the regard and interest felt for them by the members of the other local churches. “We being many,” says

St. Paul to the Romans, “are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another;” and again, “Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love;” and again to the Corinthians, “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” And to the Thessalonians he writes, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth, so that we *ourselves glory in you* in the churches of God, for your patience and faith.” He seldom indeed begins an epistle to any church without his own and his fellow labourers’ prayers and good-wishes; or concludes it, without mentioning the sympathy and interest felt for them by their Christian brethren, in all the other Christian societies.

The proofs indeed of the divine origin of the Gospel are so strong, and its importance to each individual believer so great, that, considering the case abstractedly, it might seem needless to attempt confirming a man’s faith in it by

appealing to the authority of others who believe the same ; or heightening his zeal in the cause, by setting before him their example. And certainly, the early converts at least, were not led to embrace the Gospel by any tendency to comply with prevailing notions. But such is human nature, that we cannot completely trust to a man's always conforming his belief to reason, or his practice to his belief ; but must resort to the aid of every secondary motive that can be brought into play. Now of these there is certainly none that have more influence, on faith, and feeling, and practice, than the example and sympathy of others. Where indeed is the man who can presume to say, that his faith would be equally firm, if no one held it besides himself ? or that his feelings and his conduct would be the same, if he found that, in both, he stood perfectly single ?

Again, the regular government of any society, and the mutual instruction and assistance, the admonition, exhortation, and correction, which its members may receive from each other, with a view to the furtherance of the common cause, and their being enabled by this means to



combine their exertions,—to act in concert, on plans jointly devised,—and to hold together in one Body, or in several Bodies acting on common principles, instead of interfering with each other, are among the advantages to be derived from their union. And these accordingly were not overlooked by the Apostles: “Obey them,” says Paul, “that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account:” and again, “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.” “Ye younger,” says Peter, “submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another.” “Confess your faults,” says James, “one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” And Timotheus, whom Paul so carefully instructs in his episcopal duties, and charges to “preach, reprove, and exhort,” was especially left by him at Ephesus, to “charge some, that they preach no other doctrine;” and thus to prevent disorders in the Church.

Lastly, one of the most important advantages which the members of any embodied society possess, is, the distribution of distinct offices among different individuals; which is usually called the division of labour. In the political community it is well known how much the increase of national wealth, and the other objects proposed by the civil union, is by this means promoted:<sup>d</sup> but any other kind of association also may, upon the same principle, secure to itself similar, if not equal advantages: and the Christian Church especially, may possess them in a most important degree. Besides the benefit of having a certain number of Christians set apart as ministers of the Gospel, (not indeed as the only persons engaged in God's service, but as more peculiarly and exclusively devoted to it, and withdrawn from other occupations,) besides this, I say, there is an opportunity for a still further division of labour among these last;—still narrower spheres of action may be taken by different Christian ministers, without any fear that other departments should be neglected.

<sup>d</sup> Political-Economy, Lect. VI.

Some may devote themselves more especially to the instruction of youth, others, to the edification of their adult hearers; some, to the critical study of the sacred text, others to the ascertaining and defending of the doctrines contained in it, or to researches into the belief and practice of the primitive churches; and some again may employ themselves chiefly in collecting the results of the learned labours of others, throwing them into a popular form, illustrating, and enforcing them: some, may be champions of the faith against heretics,—some, commentators,—some, missionaries. In short, the diversity of useful employments, in the common cause of our religion, may be no less than that of the spiritual gifts among the ancient Christians: a diversity which, as it tended ultimately to the promotion of a single end, the Apostle Paul exhorted them to regard as a bond of more perfect union, not a source of jealousy or division: and he compares it to the diversity of functions of the several members of the body, which cooperate for the common welfare of the whole. “As the body,” says he, “is one, and hath many members, and all the members of

that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . . . For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? . . . . Ye," says he, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular." And again, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"

These diverse gifts and offices were intended, as he continually reminds his converts, to conduce the more effectually to the one common end, the stability, and edification, and augmentation of the community.—Such being then the advantages, and such the divine sanction of the Christian communion of Saints, it is clearly the duty of every believer in Christ to use his best endeavours for preserving its vigour and its

harmony. *He* is an unworthy and useless member, who has no spirit of fellowship with his brethren,—no inclination to unite, sympathize, and cooperate with them: *he* is a corrupt and mischievous member, who either himself creates, or provokes others to create, groundless divisions and dissension in it. The one fault may be characterized as a deficiency in that party-feeling we have been speaking of, (a deficiency at least in that particular branch of it which concerns the *Christian*, considered *as such*;) the other, as an *excess* and abuse of that same feeling. The one may be compared to the fault of a citizen who is destitute of patriotism, and indifferent to the welfare of the State; the other, to that of the factious and rebellious, in whom a similar coalescing principle is directed to a different object, and pushed to a vicious extreme.

It has been already observed, that party-feeling is a source of disunion as well as of union,—of dissension as well as of agreement; since attachment to any party implies hostility to every opposed or rival party. And in addition to this, it has also been mentioned, as a part of our constitution, not only that men feel

attachment to the party or community of which they are *already* members, but also that those who have any thing of doctrine, sentiment, or practice in common, are inclined to coalesce and combine together, into a Body, and keep that Body distinct from such as differ from them on these points. When therefore this tendency is carried to excess, any minor point of coincidence will unite with each other, and separate from the rest, part of the members of that Body so formed. And hence it is the very nature of this feeling, when not duly controlled, to produce not only bitter animosity between opposite parties, but also internal divisions in each ;—not only to inflame them one against another, but also to subdivide and multiply them ; and thus to destroy its own works, by separating into hostile factions the very persons whom it had originally drawn together. Men are loth to recognize the operation of the same principle in different cases, when its operation is in the one beneficial, and in the other mischievous ; but an attentive observer will be compelled to admit, that the same inclination to combine with those who agree with them on any point, or have any

thing in common with them, and to keep apart from, or oppose, all others, together with a strong attachment to the party they belong to, has often led the same men, at one time to perform the most important services to the State, in contests with foreign enemies, and, at another time, when uncontrolled by virtuous principle and sound discretion, to produce in that very State the most ruinous factions: and that the same spirit which supported the infant Church against its pagan enemies, became, when perverted and corrupted, the fruitful source (especially in the more flourishing state of the Church) of furious contentions, and obstinate schisms.

Our Lord, who saw the excesses and deprivations to which party-feeling is liable, as well as its advantages,—its abuses as well as its utility,—charges his disciples to “have peace one with another;” and offers up, in their presence, a solemn petition to the Father for their unity. And his apostles also are frequent and earnest in exhorting their converts to maintain the strictest union and most perfect concord among themselves, and to be on their guard

against such as “caused divisions among them.”

Those who, in their dread of strife and party-violence, would seek to preserve this union by abstaining from all mention of every doctrine that is likely to afford matter of controversy,—by laying aside all formularies, and confessions of faith,—and by regarding with indifference all varieties of opinion among professors of Christianity,—would in fact put an end to the very existence of the society itself, whose integrity and concord they would preserve. In preventing hurtful contentions, by giving up every thing that is worth contending about, they would be rooting out the wheat along with the tares ; and for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, would be condemning the field to perpetual sterility. And after all, it would be but an apparent union that would result ; since the members of the same nominal Church could have but little sympathy with each other’s sentiments and designs, when they knew them to be essentially at variance with their own. It seems indeed little less than a contradiction, to speak of a *religious community*, whose members are radically *different* in religion.



We are not then to hold a society together by renouncing the objects of it; nor to part with our faith and our hope, as a means of attaining charity; but rather seek to combine the three; and by earnest zeal, without violence or bigotry,—by firmness, accompanied with moderation, discretion, and temper,—by conciliating adversaries, without sacrificing the truth,—and by hearty yet mild cooperation with friends, to obtain the advantages of party-feeling, yet avoid its evils; and promote peace, without falling into indifference.

In most ages of Christianity indeed, the excess and abuse of party-feeling has been the more prevalent, or at least the more conspicuous, of the two opposite faults just noticed: and the cautions and admonitions of our Lord and his Apostles against it, are still as applicable as ever, and will continue to be so, as long as human nature shall remain the same. It is proposed then, in the remainder of these lectures, to offer some remarks on the evils which arise from the perversions and the inordinate violence of party-feeling, and on the means by which those evils may be prevented, or cured, or alleviated.

In the course of this discussion, my object

will be, not to defend our faith against heretics, and our Church against separatists, by bringing home the charge of error against the one, and of schism against the other; (for in this most important office, there are perhaps enough, who are, and have been, successfully employed;) but rather to warn the orthodox and the churchman against such errors in their *own* conduct as may occasion, or aggravate, or prolong, the evils of heresy and schism in others;—to examine, in short, and guard against the faults, not so much of our opponents, as of ourselves; a subject which is not at all less necessary to be attended to, than the other, but which is not so often discussed, and is much more likely to escape our attention. If it be possible (as it certainly is) that he who himself holds the truth, may contribute to occasion another's falling into error; and that a schismatical party may be produced, or its violence exasperated, or its existence protracted, by those who do not join it, it cannot but be of high importance to consider the means of avoiding such faults: especially when it is recollected, that the arguments used against adversaries, however sound and ingenious, may,

in many instances, never reach them at all ; or when they do, will often be listened to with prejudice ; so that frequently they will do little more than confirm those who are already convinced : whereas the admonitions addressed to our own brethren, will be likely to obtain a hearing at least, if not a favourable and a profitable hearing.

Before however we seek for preventives or remedies for a disease, it is desirable that we should thoroughly understand the nature of it. I propose therefore in the ensuing lecture to consider the nature and origin of the excess and abuse of party-feeling,—the combination of it with other principles of the human mind, and the effects to which it has led. May He of whose body we are members,—who has promised his support to the Church militant on earth,—and through whom we hope to join the Church triumphant in heaven,—vouchsafe to aid our exertions,—to direct our inquiries,—and to lead us, by his Spirit, into all the truth !

## LECTURE II.

### PARTY-SPIRIT.

---

#### JAMES iii. 14—17.

*If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

As there is no original principle of our nature that is not designed to answer some good purpose, so there is none that is not liable to become mischievous, when ill-regulated, and

misdirected, and excessive : and those which, under the control of moral principle and discretion, are the *most* beneficial, are commonly the most hurtful also, when they escape from that control. Such accordingly is the case with that party-feeling which has been already described, as the principle which leads men readily to combine and embody themselves, in parties and societies, of various kinds ;—which heightens their zeal in any *common* cause ; and which makes the *Body* they belong to, an object of regard in itself, distinct from the individuals composing it : sometimes indeed when no regard is felt for *them* ; nay, even when (from the nature of the case) each one of them is a rival, and an object of jealousy.

This principle then, under various names and characters, produces energy and cooperation in various departments of human life. In the form of patriotism, it preserves the existence, and promotes the prosperity of States ; and in many other shapes also exerts a most extensive and important, and often, most salutary influence.

Its excesses and perversions are proportionably mischievous. It is liable not only to prevail

in too great a *degree*, so as to become too predominant, but also to operate *unduly*, in cases where it ought to be excluded; and again to pursue its objects by improper *means*. All these may be called, (conformably to the received language of the best moral writers) *excesses*, of various kinds; in the same manner as we usually reckon among the *excesses* of anger, not only its extreme *violence*, but, also, its being too easily *excited*,—too *permanent*,—directed to *wrong objects*,—and the like.

I. The most remarkable, and most properly characteristic, excess of party-feeling, is the tendency to *prefer the means to the end*;—the permanence, and prosperity, and aggrandizement, of any party or society, to the objects themselves which it proposes, or professes to propose, and for the sake of which, it is established.

When men shew an extravagant and disproportionate eagerness for that which is the object of their joint efforts, it is not always easy to pronounce how much of this fault is fairly to be laid to the account of excessive party-feeling, and how much may be attributed to an original over estimate of the end proposed: but when

they become comparatively *indifferent* to that very end, and yet still adhere and devote themselves to the party,—when (as is frequently the case) the original purpose seems nearly or entirely forgotten, by every member of the Body, and yet the Body itself still holds together in full force, and maintains its distinct existence,—we may then decidedly call such a disposition an excess of party-feeling. And something of this nature is usually intended by the term, *party-spirit*; that name being most commonly applied in an unfavourable sense.

Instances of this are very numerous. Many remarkable ones have occurred among the Jesuits, who having been formed into a compact and carefully-regulated society, evinced a proportionate degree of the party-zeal and attachment which are thus generated and kept alive. Had their object been originally the propagation and maintenance of the Gospel of Him whose name they adopted, and had they kept steadily to that object, the institution might have been highly beneficial. But, as in other cases, so, most remarkably in this, zeal for the security and influence of their order, nearly swallowed

up their zeal for their own professed object: they were often ready to compromise the cause of religion, for the sake of advancing the interests of the Body: and there are even said to have been individuals among them, who were ready to sacrifice in the cause of the society, every selfish object,—every comfort and enjoyment of life, and even life itself, though at the same time they were not even believers in the truth of Christianity.

Thus too, examples abound in every page of history, and present themselves continually before our eyes, of men who with little or no mixture of personal motives, but acting almost entirely from a perverted patriotism, are ready to sacrifice without scruple, for the glory and aggrandizement of the State, not only themselves, but also the lives, and the property, and the happiness of their fellow-citizens, (considered individually,) though the security of these is the very object of civil society.

One circumstance which most specially tends to lead the members of any party into a forgetfulness of their legitimate and original purpose, is the necessity, or at least expediency, of paying



attention to other objects, distinct from this. Almost every society has some regulations and institutions, whose immediate end is the preservation of the society, and which have no intrinsic value ; like the fortifications of a town, which are worthless in themselves, but are essential to the security of the citizens' habitations and goods ; and whose defence is therefore the more carefully attended to, because, were these abandoned, nothing would remain that could be effectually defended. Of this character are many parts of the constitution of our own Country, and of other States ; which have no *immediate* tendency to increase the happiness of the subject, but only, to maintain a proper balance in the government,—to secure the due enactment and administration of laws,—and in short, to preserve the society in its existing form. These accordingly are guarded with commendable vigilance, as important rights, and are sometimes termed, not improperly, the *bulwarks* of the constitution.

Moreover, it is generally found desirable that a party should have some external marks and badges of distinction,—often an arbitrary

symbol,—to indicate their internal sentiments and dispositions; that the members of it may be kept apart from others, and mutually known among themselves, and held together. These are like the standards in an army; which the soldiers are taught to defend at all hazards, because, though, in themselves, not worth defending, they are the signs by which they are to distinguish friend from foe, and by which they are to be kept together in proper order. Accordingly we find the members of any sect, society, or other body of men, (especially if living mingled with others,) always disposed to adopt as a mark, either some peculiarity in their language, habit, or mode of living, or the observance of some peculiar ceremony, often having as little *natural* connexion with the objects of the party, as the military standard has with war.

All these signs of distinction have the effect, not only of keeping the party united and entire, but also of increasing men's attachment to it. The human mind is so formed, as to take an interest in every thing that is, in any way, a *peculiarity*; and party-feeling is roused and invigorated by every circumstance which *reminds*

the partisans of their being a distinct Body, and of the tie subsisting between them.

And here it may be worth while to remark, by the way, that one advantage, at least, of the numerous ceremonies and marks of distinction which were enjoined to the Israelites, may be perceived from what has been just mentioned. A small nation, surrounded by idolaters, whose profane rites had so much that was seductive to uncultivated minds, needed something more to preserve them from contamination, than the intrinsic purity and sublimity of their religion. Every distinctive sign or observance that could remind them hourly of their being a peculiar people, and separate them widely from the rest of mankind, was requisite to preserve the essential parts of their institutions from being lost or corrupted.

Now as every thing that men have been long accustomed to prize and regard, (from whatever cause,) becomes endeared to them by association, and at length appears, in their eyes, intrinsically precious, we need not wonder at finding that these secondary objects of a society, when they have occupied (as must frequently

be the case) the larger portion of their attention, should in time come to be regarded as *primary*; and should at length usurp an undue portion, if not the whole, of their regard;—that while the fortifications (to pursue the illustrations above employed) are sedulously guarded and kept in repair, the city itself should be suffered to fall to decay; and that men should cling to their standard, while they forget the cause in which they were enlisted, or remember it only as a pretext, without any sincere and hearty attachment to it. This may well be called, in the Apostle James's words, “lying against the truth,” and “hypocrisy.”

This undue preference then of the means to the end,—of the distinctions of a party, to the original purpose of it,—may be regarded as one grand characteristic of party-spirit.

II. Another kind of excess which deservedly bears the same name, consists in an over readiness to *form* and fall into parties, on frivolous grounds, or on improper occasions; by which it often happens, (as was remarked in the last discourse,) that a society is broken up by the undue operation of the same principle that

originally helped to form and maintain it; and perhaps, while weakened by these groundless internal divisions, and split into a multitude of petty factions, falls an easy prey to some common enemy, whom its combined force might have resisted.

III. Lastly, party-spirit is justly charged upon those who go all lengths of bigoted partiality and narrow-minded prejudice, in matters relating to their party;—who are wanting in candour and charity towards those of another party, and unfair in any contest with them; who are strangers, in short, to that “wisdom from above, which is not only peaceable and gentle,” but also “without *partiality*.”

The great historian of Greece<sup>a</sup>, who described, with such frightful vividness of colouring, the political party-spirit of his own times, and who pronounced, with the prophetic power which results from wide experience, acute observation, and sound judgment, that the like would be ever liable to recur, though in various forms and degrees, has proved but too true a prophet.

<sup>a</sup> Thucyd. b. iii.

Much of his description may be applied with very slight, or without any, alteration, to many subsequent periods, not excepting the present; and especially in what relates to that kind of party-spirit which has been last mentioned. No assurances, he says, or pledges, of either party, could gain credit with the other; the most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent, were received, not with candour, but with suspicion; no artifice was reckoned dishonourable by which a point could be carried; all recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned a mark, either of cowardice, or of insincerity;—he only was accounted a thoroughly safe man, whose violence was blind and boundless;—and those who endeavoured to steer a middle course, were spared by neither side.

It is worth remarking also, with reference to the branch of party-spirit formerly noticed, how completely the welfare of the State, (the professed object of each party,) was sacrificed without hesitation by both; nay, how each so far forgot their originally *real* object, a preponderance in the government of an independent State, that each, by turns, were ready to subject

*themselves*, as well as their fellow-citizens, to a foreign yoke.

That all this should sound as much like a prophecy concerning the affairs of the Christian Church, as a narrative of what took place in the secular affairs of heathens, is matter of sorrow, of shame, and of wonder. They indeed were not ignorant of the evil of such conduct; but they had not such strong motives for abstaining from it: they knew that “where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work;” but they knew not that “the wisdom which is peaceable and gentle, descendeth from above,”—from Him who has promised so richly to reward it; they knew not *whose* children the peacemakers should be called; nor the blessing pronounced upon the merciful. But the fact is, Christians, as well as Pagans, are apt to apply their knowledge of what is right and wrong, to the case of their neighbours, instead of their own; and to employ their moral judgment in detecting and justly censuring the faults of the opposite party, while they are blind to the same faults in themselves. No improvement in religious and moral knowledge (if we thus look

only to the mote in our brother's eye) can answer any purpose, but to increase our condemnation.

Besides the faults already mentioned, as, properly speaking, excesses of party-feeling itself, there are many other propensities also, which have an especial tendency to mix themselves with this feeling,—to call it into action,—and to aggravate its mischiefs. Such are VANITY and AMBITION; fondness for NOVELTY; love of DISPUTATION, in those who are, or believe themselves, skilful disputants; and lastly, that PROUD SPIRIT, which delights in humbling, mortifying, and insulting others, and triumphs in taking vengeance for any opposition or affront.

Both the love of power and the love of fame, are so effectually gratified by a man's being one of the leaders or principal supporters of a party, that he has hence an obvious temptation to *form* or to cherish a party, in order to increase his own influence, and shew his importance; especially if (as is often the case) no other avenues to power and distinction appear to lie open to him. And many, doubtless, who have been influenced by these or other corrupt motives,



have been themselves by no means aware of the bias under which they were acting; but have effectually deceived their own consciences, by exaggerating, to themselves, as well as to others, the importance of the cause they were engaged in.<sup>b</sup>

Again, the love of novelty,—the pleasure men have in the idea of being original-thinkers, or, at least, of being able to shake off established prejudices,—to judge for themselves, and to despise the notions of the vulgar,—these, have a strong tendency to induce men to broach new doctrines or schemes of their own, or to adopt those proposed by another; and thus to create and strengthen parties.<sup>c</sup>

Controversial ability also, real or supposed, contributes powerfully to generate, and keep up, and inflame party-spirit, by creating in the able disputant a fondness for controversy<sup>d</sup>; in the

<sup>b</sup> Wesley seems to have been, in a most remarkable degree, unconscious of the ambitious feelings by which he was so much influenced.

<sup>c</sup> Priestley, and many other unitarian writers, afford some of the most striking instances of the operation of this principle.

<sup>d</sup> Many examples might be found among the metaphysical theologians who have written on the Calvinistic questions.

same manner as the possession of military skill, and the command of warlike troops, is apt to encourage a delight in war. Every one naturally feels a pleasure in doing that which he is conscious of doing well; especially if it be what has long been his accustomed employment. And though no one probably ever *acknowledged*, even to himself, a feeling of mortification at the abolition of a party, and the dropping of a controversy, which might have employed the eloquence of his tongue and pen, or a regret that his sword should rust in inglorious peace, yet no one who is acquainted with human nature, can doubt the existence of such feelings.

Now controversy being almost always either the offspring or the parent of party, it is not wonderful that a love of disputation should almost always either give occasion to, or exasperate, party-spirit. And that the most trifling subject (if no more important one be at hand) will furnish, to those who are so disposed, matter for furious debate, division into factions, and narrow-minded bigotry, is remarkably exemplified in the celebrated dispute between the Realists and Nominalists, which so long and so

vehemently agitated the public mind; till the Reformation quelled it, by diverting the attention of the disputants to a more interesting subject: a sufficient proof that religion was not the *cause* of these acrimonious contests, but only furnished the matter of them;—it was the field on which the combatants engaged, but did not excite them to the battle.

Lastly, all the proud, insolent, and resentful feelings of mankind, and the delight they take in triumphing over an opponent, have a powerful influence (when men are once engaged) in keeping up and embittering the spirit of party. Their zeal and animosity, however small at first, are inflamed by opposition; and they become attached to the party in whose ranks they have *fought*. If there be not, as some have supposed, a love of contention for its own sake, inherent in some men, it is certain that a haughty resentment of every provocation, and a delight in humbling, mortifying, and triumphing over, an adversary, are dispositions but too general. Now the breaking down of party distinctions, and the silencing of controversy, destroys the hope of such triumphs; and every kind of compromise

and concession is most revolting to a proud, angry, and jealous spirit. These haughty and insolent passions therefore, as well as those above-mentioned, contribute greatly to call forth and to cherish party-spirit, which, in turn, fosters and inflames *them*. Intemperate violence and bitterness of hostility has indeed been above reckoned as itself one of the excesses of party-feeling: and in fact, the influence of the malevolent passions and of party-spirit on each other being mutual, men are sometimes, by their attachment to a party, led to indulge in a malignant triumph, and sometimes, by their delight in such a triumph, become attached to a party.

A long catalogue of other feelings might be added, which under particular circumstances, and in particular individuals, tend to promote party-spirit, and to aggravate its mischiefs; but these which have been mentioned are not such as are *occasionally* and *accidentally* connected with it, but are its natural forerunners, or concomitants, whatever be the nature of the party, of the cause, or of the contests it leads to.

The baneful *effects* of party-spirit, and its

train of accompanying evil passions, are too common (unhappily) and well-known, especially in the Christian Church, to need being much insisted on. In fact, ecclesiastical history consists mainly of a detail of them.

1. Of these effects, the most obvious and the most shocking, is the extinction of Christian Charity,—of that spirit of meekness, forbearance, and benevolence, which are characteristic of the Gospel. If one should go through Paul's description of charity,<sup>e</sup> reversing every point in the detail, he would have no incorrect description of party-spirit, as it has appeared in almost all ages of the Church. — Party-spirit is *not* “long-suffering nor kind;” party-spirit “envieth, vaunteth itself, is puffed up;” (making men feel a pride in their own party, and hostile jealousy towards all others.) “Party-spirit seeketh her own;” (narrowing men's views to the welfare of their party, and inclining them

<sup>e</sup> The Ἀγάπη delineated by the Apostle, seems, in his description, to have embraced all the sanctifying effects of the Holy Spirit, and consequently to have conveyed an idea more comprehensive than the widest sense of our word Charity: but it certainly is described as *including* this.

to sacrifice the interests of all others to it;) “Party-spirit is easily provoked; thinketh evil;” (being ever ready to attribute to an adversary the worst motives and designs;) “rejoiceth in iniquity, and rejoiceth not in “the truth;” catching eagerly at every unfair advantage, and leading to an indifference about Gospel-truth, which was the object originally professed.

What bitter animosity and alienation of the minds of Christians from each other have arisen from this spirit,—what mutual revilings and anathemas;—what wars and massacres, oppression and persecution have ensued, it is unnecessary, as it would be painful to describe:—painful, not so much because Christians were the *objects*, as because they were the *authors*, of these cruelties: for that our Lord’s followers should suffer from hatred and malice, is no more than they were taught, by Him, occasionally to expect; but that they should themselves be the prey of such evil passions, against which He so earnestly warned them, and should substitute intestine “strife, and confusion, and every evil work,” for the mutual love which He inculcated as the characteristic by which “all men should know his disciples,”

is matter of grievous disappointment, and of shame.

2. The Scandal to the cause of truth which hence arises, is another, and one of the heaviest evils of party-spirit. The acrimonious, and often frivolous, contests among Christians, and the bigotry and mutual hatred between sects, have always been matter of scornful triumph to the infidel, and a stumbling-block to the weak ; and this the more, inasmuch as it is those who are *seemingly* most zealous in the cause of religion, that display the most of this fault. Hence we hear it commonly said, “these very *good* people who talk so much about a Christian spirit, are quite as harsh in their judgments and as bitter against their opponents, as the most ungodly : their religion therefore serves only to sour their temper ; or, at best, their professions are but mere cant and pretence.” And thus Christianity is regarded as the source of those evils, for which her genuine spirit, if really dwelling in our hearts, is the most effectual cure. The reproach is indeed unjust ; since experience shews that any human transactions and opinions,

however trifling, may serve as a basis from which this spirit may arise in all its extravagance and violence. But still the scandal *will exist* ; and whatever condemnation *they* incur who transfer to the religion, the censure which is due to its professors,—or whatever certainty we may feel that such stumbling-blocks shall always be to be found, by those who seek for them,—still there is not therefore the less heavy judgment to be looked for by those who “give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” “It must needs be that offences come ; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.”

3. Lastly, another evil effect of party-spirit is the establishment and propagation of Error. Falsehood, like poison, will generally be rejected when administered alone ; but when blended with wholesome ingredients, may be swallowed unperceived. The mixture of truth and falsehood in the fallacious arguments of the sophist, is one way in which this may be effected : but another is, the connexion of sound and erroneous notions, from their being both held by the same party. It is notorious that each member



of any religious or other party usually adopts their doctrines and practices, in the mass; feeling himself bound, (as it were, by his allegiance to it,) to make no exceptions, and distinctions; and regarding *him* as an adversary in disguise, who would analyse this compound, and try each point separately by the test of reason or of revelation. Whatever therefore may chance to be *wrong*, in this *set* of opinions and principles, is likely to pass unobserved, or to be disguised as to its real character by its artificial connexion with so much that he has been accustomed to venerate.

It is true indeed that *sound* doctrines also, and valuable precepts, may in this way find admittance with some, who might otherwise have rejected them; but while this advantage is enjoyed by truth and falsehood alike, we cannot but acknowledge (if we allow truth to be in itself the stronger) that whatever tends thus to put them on a level, is, on the whole, less favourable to the cause of truth, than of error. Not to mention that what is thus admitted in the mass, without separate attention and examination, even though it chance to be true and right, cannot have the same beneficial effect on the

mind, as if it were left to stand on its own claims, and were received *because* it is true and right.

And hence, it is a great recommendation of our Church, that She appeals in all things to the Scriptures, the only collection of unmixed and infallible truth; and challenges a trial of her doctrines and practices, both collectively and separately, by that test. Had She (like the Church of Rome) demanded unhesitating assent to them on her own authority, even though She had been free from all the errors which, in that church, have been blended with the truth, and as it were sanctified by their union with it, still our belief and our practice would not have been so properly scriptural, nor so profitable to ourselves<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> Those therefore (it may be observed by the way) who, on any question that arises, appeal, at once, and finally, to what our Church teaches, urging that they have been long since fully and fairly convinced of her conformity to Scripture, and that therefore they may safely acquiesce in her decision; though they eventually arrive at a true conclusion, are not proceeding in the way most conformable to the spirit of our Church, nor most conducive to her honour. Let them search the Scriptures themselves, with candour and diligence; secure that the conclusions fairly drawn from them, cannot of course be at variance with the doctrines of an orthodox Church:

The principal ill-effects then of party-spirit may be classed under the three heads just mentioned; *viz.* 1st. The uncharitable temper which it generates and fosters; 2dly. The scandal and scorn it occasions in the “minds of them that are without;” and 3dly. The tendency it has to disguise, and propagate, and support, error.

I have endeavoured also to sketch out the character of those excesses themselves which are deservedly stigmatized under the name of party-spirit; as consisting either in a preference of the means to the end;—(of the institutions and the distinctions of a party, to its original object)—or in an over-readiness to form parties on slight occasions; or in a bigoted attachment to our own party, and excessive hostility against its rivals. And the other passions have been also enumerated which most tend to engender

which doctrines will therefore derive confirmation from such an inquiry, when their conformity to Scripture is thus exhibited.

It is true of every Church, that a sincere member of it *must* (in one sense or the other of that word) hold the doctrines of that Church. But it makes all the difference, whether he holds the doctrines *because* he is a member of the Church, or continues a member of the Church because (on scriptural grounds) he holds her doctrines. See Romish Errors, Ch. iv.

and aggravate party-spirit; *viz.* men's ambition of being leaders or active supporters of a party, with a view to power or credit; fondness for novelty; the love of disputation; and delight in triumphing over and insulting opponents.

A Society or Body of the character of that to which Christians, as such, belong,—whether considered as the one Body of Christ, the universal Church united by allegiance to one heavenly Ruler, or as each of the distinct Christian communities, under its own governors on earth,—such a Society is, in itself, and to those who are imbued with the genuine spirit of the Gospel, peculiarly safe from all these excesses; much as almost every Church has suffered from them, through the frail and corrupt nature of its members. For in the first place, its ultimate object, the salvation of souls, is not one which, from its *own character*, is liable to be lost sight of; since it is one which *ought* at least to occupy more earnest and sedulous attention than all others besides. Moreover, its internal concord, and the avoiding of causeless divisions, are inculcated by its divine Founder and his followers, upon the most powerful motives, when they teach all

Christians to regard themselves as sons of the same heavenly Father,—sanctified by the same Spirit,—members of Christ's body, and joint-heirs with Him of immortality. Nor can any society be, in itself, less liable to uncharitable bigotry than that which aims at bringing into subjection to one spiritual Master, all mankind,—and *that*, with a view to their own present and future happiness; and whose prescribed and appropriate means of accomplishing this, are, mild persuasion, and good example. And lastly, a Christian society, is one whose essential character and spirit is especially and decidedly opposed to the indulgence of such evil passions as inordinate ambition and vanity,—or an idle craving after *novelties* of our own devising, while the infallible and *final* revelation of God's will is before us;—or a disputatious, and a resentful and insolent temper.

If therefore (as unhappily is too often the case) the Christian religion has been made the occasion of “envying and strife,” and the Church, a scene of “confusion and every evil work,” the fault lies with Christians themselves; and frequently (as was formerly remarked) with

*both* of two opposite parties;—with the intemperate and injudicious of the orthodox; as well as with the heterodox;—with those who provoke and aggravate schism, as well as those who join in it.

It will be the object (as has been above intimated) of the ensuing lectures, to suggest such cautions and rules of conduct as may be useful in preventing or alleviating the various evils of party-spirit, both by checking the excessive tendency to create, or keep up, parties and controversies, on insufficient grounds; and also by introducing, as far as is possible, moderation and discretion into the conduct of those already subsisting.

But there is an objection, which (as it stands on the threshold) it may be as well, before we enter on this branch of the design, to touch upon slightly, though it will be more fully considered hereafter. There are many who contend that all the evils arising from party are chargeable on that party who are in the wrong; because one party requires to be opposed by another. They urge, that, “if bad men combine, good men must unite,” for self-defence; since

otherwise, the advocates of error, though fewer in number, and weaker in their cause, may, by acting in concert, prevail over the defenders of truth, when scattered, and, as it were, fighting in detail: nor must we, they add, deal too favourably with any adverse party; and too readily quash controversy with them, from their errors not appearing at first sight very important or dangerous; because we know not what excesses they may hereafter, (if they gain strength) be drawn into, by the influence of their leaders. We must watch therefore, say they, and combine to oppose, the smallest beginnings of heresy and schism; considering the magnitude not merely of the errors which our opponents openly maintain, but of all those likewise which, (in our judgment) are of a kindred nature, and which consequently we may expect ultimately to result from them.

Now that there is a great portion of truth in these arguments, if rightly explained and duly modified, is undeniable: and it will be allowed, I trust, that whatever there *is* of truth in them, has been, not admitted merely, but enforced and insisted on, in this, and still more in the

preceding, discourse ; in which the uses of party-feeling were pointed out,—the benefits resulting from the institution of the Christian Church fully dwelt upon, and the recommendations of our own genuine and apostolical branch of it, set forth. While we adhere therefore not only to the Christian faith, but to the social union which Christ established, and to the ordinances and institutions of our own Church, as deriving legitimately from Him all the authority it pretends to exercise, we are, so far, conforming to the principles of the argument before us. But it is plain that these principles, pushed to an extreme, and applied without any modification, will justify the formation of parties, and the excitement and prolongation of controversies for every cause, however slight ; and will thus introduce into the Church of Christ innumerable divisions and interminable strife.

For if all the evils of party are to be laid to the account of those whom we think in the wrong, (*i. e. of our opponents*) the inevitable consequence must be, that we shall see no need for any caution against these evils, in our *own* conduct. If we are to consider merely the danger



of suffering an adverse or suspected party to gain strength by being *neglected*, without taking into account also the danger of strengthening, irritating, or even generating, a hostile party, by *opposition*, we shall be perpetually provoking schisms, and widening every breach, and bringing on, in short, the very diseases we are professing to cure. And if we are to reckon ourselves at full liberty to charge men with bad designs, and their doctrines with bad tendencies, which are not obviously apparent, or avowed, we shall often be the means of aggravating the errors we injudiciously oppose, and creating the heresies we rashly impute; not to mention the violation of Christian charity we are guilty of, and the angry contentions we give rise to.

The tendency however of such conduct as this, may be learnt from experience as well as conjecture. Its effects have been abundantly tried; for it has been common in all ages of the Church; and an attentive study of history will convince us that it has eradicated very few heresies and schisms, compared with those it has produced and exasperated.

It is our present object to seek out a middle

course between this fault and its opposite ;— between narrow-minded bigotry and intemperate party - spirit, on the one hand, and careless indifference on the other. I am well aware however that it is impossible, from the nature of the case, to do more towards this object than suggest *general* observations, and lay down general rules ; which must be applied, in each individual instance, by each individual's attentive judgment, and good-sense. Even were the highest degree of learning, wisdom, and eloquence employed in such a task, it could not, here, supply, in any degree, the want of private discretion. It must not however be hence concluded that all attention to such general remarks and maxims, is useless. For, in fact, the same objection (if it be any) will lie against all moral precepts whatever. When ethical writers, for example, instruct us to steer a middle course between avarice and profusion, or cowardice and rashness, and describe to us these opposite extremes, they are compelled, after all, to leave it to our individual discretion to decide in each single case that occurs, whether the danger is to be shunned or encountered,—the

profit, to be sought, or rejected. Even the law of the land, when it defines what sort of wrongs shall be entitled to compensation, is forced to leave a discretionary power for deciding what actions come under its definitions, and what compensation shall be awarded in each. In like manner both our Lord and his apostles lay down general precepts, which no one would presume to call useless, yet which it rests with our own common sense to apply in each instance. They exhort men to rebuke a brother when in fault; yet forbid us to be rash or severe in judging another;—they urge us to be zealous for the faith, yet to be gentle, peaceable, and ready to make allowances;—to oppose and separate ourselves from heretics; yet to avoid strife and divisions: with innumerable other rules of the same kind, which they (necessarily) leave us to apply, for ourselves, in practice, according to the best of our own judgment.

It may be useful however to make these general precepts somewhat *less* general, by so developing the principles of them as to apply them to our own times and circumstances, and thus obtain the full benefit of apostolical

instruction. And such is the design of these lectures, as far as relates to the proposed subject of party-spirit and controversy.

In the ensuing discourse, the requisite cautions relative to the temper of our own minds will be considered : and afterwards those relating to our treatment of others.

I will conclude by reminding you, that however little hope any individual may feel of being able, by his own exertions and example, materially to diminish the evils of party-spirit, it is not the less important to *him*, individually, that he should use his best endeavours against those evils ; and at least keep *himself* clear of any share in producing them ; “ Be not thou,” says Paul, “ a partaker in other men’s sins ; keep thyself pure.” However great and incurable these sins may be, he who has had no share in them, will be saved from sharing in their punishment ; and he who has done his best, however ineffectually, to lessen them, will be not the less amply rewarded by Him who “ seeth in secret,”—who is Himself the dispenser of success or failure,—and who alone can fully estimate our intentions and our endeavours.

## LECTURE III.

A CARNAL MIND THE CAUSE OF DIVISIONS.

---

1 COR. iii. 3.

*Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

THE carnal mind of which Paul here speaks, and which he elsewhere calls “death,” and declares to be a state of “enmity against God,” consists, evidently, (according to the Apostle’s use of the expression,) in a predominance of the base and corrupt propensities of unregenerate human nature;—that sinful nature which we inherit from our first parents, and which he sometimes designates by the appellation of “the old man, which is corrupt according to the

deceitful lusts ;” as distinguished from “ the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness ;”—that state in which all those evil passions are subdued by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and the whole heart subjected to the dominion of Christ.

To the depraved views then, and sinful desires of “ the natural man,” unrenewed by the grace of the Gospel, the Apostle attributes the divisions which prevailed at Corinth. James also speaks the same language, when he says, “ From whence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts ?” And it is worth remarking that neither Apostle is, in that place, charging his hearers with holding heretical opinions, nor blaming one sect in particular ; but rebuking them generally for party-spirit and discord ; which they attribute to a “ carnal mind,” and corrupt passions.

And accordingly, various passions are found, under different circumstances, to lead men into the faults here censured ;—to sow divisions among them,—combine them in sects or factions,—and inflame them with party-hatred

against each other. Sometimes self-interest<sup>a</sup> may chance to be the first mover of discord; sometimes even timidity will induce men to join a party, that they may avoid the censure and ill will of its members. Such appears to have been the case with Peter on the occasion where he incurred Paul's rebuke, for his weak compliance with the prejudices of the Judaizing Christians, in separating himself from the gentile-converts who did not comply with the Mosaic law; and thus fostering the schism which was then growing into strength.

The evil passions however which are more peculiarly and intimately connected with party-spirit, together with those depraved views, and excesses of feeling and of conduct, which may properly be regarded as *constituting* that spirit, are those which were noticed in the last lecture; and it was there proposed, that (those faults having been characterised, and their tendency

<sup>a</sup> It happens but too often, it is to be feared, that a dissenting chapel is regarded as a profitable speculation, by such persons as Paul describes 1 Tim. vi. 5. "of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," "*νομιζόντων πορισμὸν εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν*, looking upon religion as a gainful occupation;" for so the passage ought evidently to be rendered.

pointed out) we should next inquire for the best methods of preventing or lessening them; and should consider in the first place the requisite cautions, as to the temper of our own minds, for avoiding the evils in question.

No one indeed who calls himself a Christian, can seriously question the necessity of putting on a Christian temper; nor can any one who candidly examines his Bible, find any difficulty in ascertaining what that temper is; but those who have persuaded themselves that all the mischiefs of party are to be charged on those who in point of opinion are on the wrong side, (*i. e.* in other words, on their opponents,) will be apt to take but little care as to the spirit that actuates themselves. Men must be first convinced how wrong those may be in disposition and conduct, who are on the right side, before they can be brought to that candid self-examination, and diligent watchfulness, which are necessary in order to derive practical benefit from the precepts of Scripture.

I. The desire of taking the lead, was mentioned as one of the passions which most



frequently aid in producing and keeping alive the spirit of party. And it is one which must be carefully watched, and strenuously repressed by the Christian; since it will be continually springing up as temptations occur, and not only leading frequently to mischievous results, but corrupting the motives of even our best actions. Even he who has engaged in the worthiest cause with the purest intentions, when he finds himself likely to obtain fame or influence, will often be deceived, by the desire of these so intruding itself into his mind, as in time to encroach upon, and at length supplant, his original honest zeal. His principle of action will thus have become “carnal,” even while his conduct remains the same; and he will “walk as men,” even while engaged in the service of God. But, if rivals should then spring up, who threaten to eclipse his reputation and curtail his influence, such a man will be very likely to find some pretence for raising a party, that he may be the leader. For Cæsar was not the only man who would rather be the first in a village than the second at Rome. And he who is thus led to create a schism, will infect with the spirit of party, not only himself, but

as many followers as he can collect. To this source Paul traces expressly many of the divisions which prevailed in his own days; the authors of which he designates as ambitious “to make a fair shew in the flesh;” and “desiring to have the Galatians circumcised, that they might glory in their flesh;” *i. e.* that they might not only escape persecution, and gain credit with the Jews, for subjecting gentiles to the law; but also might have converts of their own to boast of.

Accordingly our Lord was careful to repress the first germs of this spirit in his disciples, who very early manifested a tendency towards it. “There was a strife among them,” we are told, “which of them should be accounted the greatest;” on which occasion He tells them, “He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.” And on another occasion, He corrects this temper in them, by setting a child in the midst of them, as a pattern of that lowliness which He required of them.

Against so besetting and so dangerous a sin, it is necessary to be always on our guard; not

only by strict and frequent self-examination as to the purity of our motives, and fervent prayer for genuine and single-hearted zeal, but sometimes also by concealing something of the beneficial influence we may be exerting, when we can do so without diminishing that benefit; and by studiously putting forward others, not only to aid in our labours, but also to take a share in the credit of them, if it be so great as would be likely, if undivided, to intoxicate our minds with pride, and thus to corrupt our motives.

And since even those who do not aspire to be *leaders* of a party, often feel their importance increased, and their self-estimation flattered by being active members of it, especially if it be a *small* party, and they are thus more effectually separated from the common mass, we must be careful to guard against the excess of this feeling also, and to keep in subjection the carnal temper, of loving for its own sake to be of consequence, and to be in any way distinguished.

II. The love of novelty is another powerful and general principle of our nature, whose tendency to create and foster divisions in the Church, was above adverted to. That a great

portion of mankind have a delight in striking out, or adopting, some new idea, even though it have little else to recommend it, is notorious; and is exemplified by numberless instances both in philosophy and in the common affairs of life. But perhaps there is no instance of it so remarkable as the heresies which arose in the Christian Church, during the life-time of the Apostles: those who had received the faith from the mouths of men who wrought miracles in confirmation of their divine commission, were yet led away by giving ear to the daring innovators whom St. Paul complains of as “preaching other doctrine” from his own; and who corrupted with their own idle devices the pure stream of divine truth, even close to the fountain-head. “The time will come,” says he to Timothy, “when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they will turn away their ears from the truth, and will be turned unto fables.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> It is worth remarking, that the existence of heresy in the very *times of the Apostles*, may serve to guard us against being

At the various fanciful systems therefore which have *since* arisen, and have flourished, each in its day, to the detriment of Christian truth and unity, we need not wonder. And especially was that to be expected which took place at the Reformation; when so many changes were necessary, in order to get rid of the corruptions introduced by the Romish Church, that those who were not strictly on their guard against the love of innovation, naturally caught at the opportunity of rushing into every new-devised extravagance of doctrine or practice that pleased their intoxicated fancy. All freedom of discussion had been so long bound up, as it were,

shaken in our trust, by its existence among *us*. Had no diversities of doctrine arisen till after the departure of the Apostles, some might have been led to doubt whether the promised Comforter had not deserted his Church. But since errors existed even during the ministry of inspired and infallible guides, we are prepared always to expect them. The only difference is, that *then*, the Apostles, proving their divine mission by their miraculous powers, were at hand, ready to satisfy any candid inquirer *which* was the true and which the false doctrine; whereas now, the reference must be made, since miraculous attestation of infallibility is withdrawn, to the writings those inspired teachers have left behind.

in the icy fetters of Romish thralldom, that when these were suddenly dissolved and broken up, it was nothing strange if a furious flood burst forth, which for a time spread general devastation and confusion ; and of whose ravage many sad vestiges remain to the present day. We cannot therefore too much admire the moderation of *our* Reformers, who maintained their calm good sense and the rationality of their zeal, in the midst of such prevailing wildness and turbulence. They seem to have had no craving after novelty for its own sake ; and (unlike those who rejected every thing connected with the ancient abuses) *they* never altered for the sake of altering ; but kept steadily in view their original object of rejecting only what had been the mischievous *innovations* of the Romanists, and *restoring* the Church of Christ to its original purity.

But the danger which they withstood, though then peculiarly strong, is not now, nor ever will be, removed, while human nature remains the same. Most sedulously are we still bound to guard against the temptation of novelty, when we consider that it had power to seduce even the hearers of the Apostles themselves.

With this view, we must constantly bear in mind, that however the case may be with other subjects, in Religion, whatever appears to be new, (if it relate to any point of considerable importance,) carries with it, so far, a presumption against its being right. In philosophy, we know not that there may not hereafter be discoveries made, even of greater magnitude and importance than all that have gone before : so that, there, though a rash prejudice in favour of every thing new, is to be avoided, the pursuit of novelty and of truth may often chance to coincide. In religion, on the contrary, a full and final revelation having been made, no discovery, properly so called, (of any high importance,) is to be expected ; not merely because the book which contains all we know of the divine will has been so long before us, (for so also has the book of nature, in which nevertheless we are daily reading new truths, which had escaped the researches of our predecessors,) but because that book was designed by the Almighty to convey such instruction as He judged needful for all ; which purpose it would not have answered, had its true meaning in essential points been hidden

till now. If therefore, for instance, a new mode of interpreting or of translating Scripture be proposed to us, which materially alters its doctrines from what have been uniformly received<sup>c</sup>, we have no need (however plausible it may appear) to rest the question upon critical researches into the ancient languages; our ready answer may be, that Plato or Aristotle indeed may have designed to write mysteriously, and to conceal their doctrines from all but the most acute philosophers; and that Polybius or Livy may have been accidentally misunderstood, till modern researches cleared up their narratives; but that if the true sense and doctrine of the Bible was not understood by any, for so many centuries, it cannot be called (at least a final) *Revelation*. Elucidations indeed of minor points, may be looked for, and may be very valuable;—fresh topics of evidence may be expected (in

<sup>c</sup> It is accordingly, with much skill, and often with success, urged by the Romanists, that their's is the ancient faith; and that the novelties of the Reformation are to be rejected at once on the sole ground of their being *novelties*. In fact this is a plain begging of the question; which is, whether the Reformation were or were not a *Restoration* of the original religion, by rejecting the innovations and corruptions of later ages.



these later times) to supply the defect of recent miracles;—prophecies may become intelligible, by their fulfilment;—and fresh arguments in support of the essential doctrines may be brought forward. All this furnishes ample scope for the utmost conceivable ingenuity and originality of thought: the unremitting labours of a whole life would be insufficient for accomplishing all that would be desirable on each of these points; so that no excuse is left for indolence and contented ignorance: but still, unless our faith be the same in the main, with that of the early Christians, we may be well assured that it is unsound.

We should studiously repress therefore all craving “to be wise above that which is written;” and endeavour to divert into some other channel any eager desire we may naturally and reasonably feel for discovering (what may be strictly called) new truths<sup>d</sup>. A boundless field lies open before us; nor need we fear that the stores of useful knowledge to be drawn from the study of nature and of science, will ever be exhausted.

<sup>d</sup> See Elements of Logic, B. iv. ch. 2.

III. A similar procedure may perhaps be sometimes adopted with advantage, when we are taking precautions to guard ourselves against another fault, often connected with the foregoing, a love of disputation. He who is conscious of being a skilful and successful disputant, if, on candid and careful self-examination, he find himself tempted, by the desire of exercising his talent, to raise or prolong controversies unnecessarily, and thus excite or keep up a spirit of party, in himself or in others, will do well to direct his attention to other subjects, on which he may innocently, and even usefully, employ his acuteness in argument. Above all, let him never venture to frame and bring forward arguments, on any point connected with religion, contrary to his real sentiments, and with a view of merely exercising his skill, by trying what can be said on that side of the question; for it is very likely that he may thus be ensnared by his own ingenuity, and adopt in earnest the erroneous conclusions he has been defending in sport, through a partial admiration of the plausibility of his own arguments<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> See Essay I. 2d Series.

It is however the more difficult to keep clear of the fault now under consideration, because controversy is sometimes necessary, for the defence of our own faith against assailants, and the correction of the errors of others : and it becomes difficult to restrain within due bounds those who have been thus, as it were, trained to war, and to keep them from taking a delight in controversy ; so that even their instructions will be delivered with something of a polemical air ; and they will often (to say nothing of the other dangers above alluded to) provoke hostility, by seeming to court it. The greater the difficulty however, the more unremitting is the care demanded of us ; we must continually examine our own hearts, whether our zeal be purely for the good cause, or for the controversy itself, which we are engaged in ;—whether we are seeking such arguments as we verily think most likely to convince the erroneous, or such as will be the most approved and admired by our own party, and the bye-standers ;—whether we are adopting the most persuasive and conciliatory forms of expression, and modes of procedure, or the most brilliant and striking ; — whether, in

short, we are labouring for truth alone, or for triumph.

IV. The disposition last alluded to,—the love of triumph,—the desire of displaying our superiority, or of revenging an affront by mortifying and humbling an opponent, has been formerly mentioned as one of those evil passions which the most frequently promote and embitter party-spirit; and it is but too common an accompaniment of a disputatious temper. He who delights in argument, will exult in the display of his skill, rather than mourn over the faults of the misguided; and, seeking victory rather than truth, will take more pleasure in exposing and confounding, than in mildly reclaiming them.

How utterly contrary such a temper is to the whole spirit of Christianity, is too obvious to need being insisted on. He who can contemplate the Son of God weeping over Jerusalem, the scene of such perverse past opposition, and of his impending crucifixion, and can hear the awful appeal of Paul, “Who made thee to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” yet can proudly triumph in his own supposed rectitude, and insult the errors of

a vanquished opponent, may perhaps be an acute theologian, but can have very little of the heart of a Christian. A man of such a temper indeed will generally do more harm than good to his own cause; but if he should chance to be the instrument of benefit to the Church, he may be fitly compared to some of those scourges who were raised up by Jehovah from among the gentiles to inflict just chastisement on his people; and were afterwards themselves destroyed for their pride and cruelty; and may be classed with those whom Paul mentions as “preaching Christ, even of envy and strife;” the success of whose labours indeed he rejoiced at; but whom we cannot suppose to have shared in that benefit which many of their humble hearers may have derived from their preaching.

If we would avoid not only the risk of detriment to the Church, but the certainty of condemnation to ourselves; — “lest, after having preached to others, we should ourselves be castaways,” — we must not too hastily reckon ourselves safe in the rectitude of our cause; but must make it a matter of anxious care, in our defence of that cause, to “let that mind be in

us which was also in Christ Jesus;" and to conform not only our faith to the doctrines of his religion, but also our temper, to its spirit.

We shall thus be the better prepared for guarding against party-spirit;—and our minds will be, as it were, a less fit soil for its growth. But the spirit itself must also be carefully watched, and every tendency towards it vigorously checked.

1. The most remarkable characteristic of party-spirit—the disposition to prefer the means to the end,—the party itself, and whatever tends to maintain it,—to the object it originally proposed, has been formerly described, and its ill effects pointed out. We must guard against it by keeping steadily in view what are the ends proposed, and what, merely the institutions that preserve the society, and the marks that distinguish and hold it together. Not that we are to neglect these; but to value and pursue them *as* means, and in proportion as they conduce to the original object. To relinquish that very object for the sake of them, or to regard it with comparative indifference,—or to uphold the party, when that object no longer appears desirable,

is not only a glaring inconsistency, but is also productive of various evil consequences.

How ready many have been to abandon the points originally regarded as the fundamental principles of their sect or church, — or how indifferent in maintaining them,—though they remain as firmly attached as ever to the same party, is well known. Few Presbyterians probably of the present day would attach much importance to most of the scruples respecting our Liturgy, and church-government, which originally operated so strongly in producing the schism. But a breach once made is not easily closed; and the lapse of time, though it may have worn away the original causes of the separation, renders a reunion more difficult than ever. The scion which has long been severed from the parent stock, cannot easily be reingrafted.

Among the members however of the Romish communion, an instance may be found which is much more remarkable, from the circumstance that, that Church claiming infallible authority, whoever admits her doctrines or practice to be in any point erroneous, has virtually denied that claim, and thereby convicted her (in his own

judgment) of a false and impious assumption of the power of the most High. Yet notwithstanding this, it is well known that there are many Romanists who (though not unbelievers in the Christian revelation) do not scruple, privately, to avow their rejection of several of the most fundamentally erroneous tenets of their Church, and their disapprobation of many of its ordinances; who are even ready to ridicule many of the superstitions it has sanctioned, and would even be sorry to have it supposed that they really made a full confession to their priests;—yet would shudder at the very mention of openly renouncing that Church; and would be even proud of their adherence to it, as to the only true and catholic church, and the only one possessing decisive and infallible authority.

It is indeed a common remark, that the *name* is in general the last thing men will consent to part with; and that a sect will often be brought insensibly to explain away or abandon most of their primary and fundamental tenets, while they would shrink from the proposal of breaking up the sect itself. Now in the case of those who



see good reason for giving up those points of distinction, and renouncing those objects, which originally formed their party, it is clear that the prohibition of causeless divisions enjoins the dissolution of the party itself; and that it is only a vicious party-spirit that can still hold it together as a distinct body. But may not a similar spirit operate on the members of a society whose object ought *not* to be abandoned, and whose fundamental principles are *not* erroneous? They also may surely be guilty of preferring the means to the end; — the party itself, and whatever tends to support it,—to the original purpose of it; and as the former class are right in abandoning their original principles, but blameable in still maintaining their party,—so, these last are right in adhering to the Body they belong to, but highly culpable in forgetting or neglecting its main object. But such is human nature, that without continual watchfulness, this tendency to prefer the means to the end will continually shew itself; and men will be less zealous for those objects which are pursued because desirable, than for one which appears to them desirable, only because they have been accustomed

to pursue it. And since this infirmity is inherent in human nature, we must not rashly flatter ourselves that the orthodoxy of our cause will preserve us from it. If in our contests with Romanists, or with sectarians, we ever find cause to censure their obstinate adherence to a party whose errors they are convinced of, let us be careful that we on our part fail not to shew as much sincere and practical attachment to our faith as to the outposts and bulwarks that defend it;—that we appear not, warmly interested for the reformation, while we are indifferent to the religion itself that is reformed, or more zealous for the mitre than the cross,—for the Church, than for the Gospel. Our Lord stands eminently distinguished from the teachers of false religions, by his never allowing respect for Himself, and zeal for the propagation of his religion, to stand as a substitute for the essential points of conformity to his commands, and personal holiness: “Why,” says He, “call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” and He declares that even they who have wrought miracles in his name, will, if found workers of iniquity, be rejected by him.

Since then the just boast of *our* Church is its conformity to the institutions of the Apostles, and its tendency to promote the religion they taught, it should be regarded as a kind of treason against that Church to profess zeal for its form, while we are careless of its spirit ; and to maintain its institutions, while we are forgetful of the ends it proposes.

2. With respect to another branch of party-spirit formerly mentioned, the tendency to create needless divisions, and to fall into parties on insufficient grounds, it is difficult to give rules sufficiently precise to be practically useful ; since, after all, it must be left to each man's private discretion to determine what *are* insufficient grounds. Let it however be carefully kept in mind, that all controversy, and all separation of Christians into opposed parties, are in themselves evils. It may be necessary to incur them, for the sake of a greater good ; but then the burden of proof must always lie on ourselves, to shew that necessity. No general rule indeed can enable us to estimate the importance of any point that comes before us ; but it is a very

useful general rule, that important points alone can authorize contests and divisions; and that they must not be wantonly and hastily excited. And not only a separation from the Church, but the encouragement, countenance, and support afforded, either to any such open schism, or to the formation of hostile parties within the Church, (as well as any conduct which provokes others to act thus,) must be justified by very sound and powerful pleas of conscience, (not of taste or convenience,) or will expose us to the condemnation of those whom the Apostle commands to be “marked and avoided” for “causing divisions.” All separation, in short, of both kinds, and all excitement of it, must be either a *duty*, or a *sin*.

This rule is not only an important one to be observed, but, obvious as it appears, is so little even thought of by many, that it is not uncommon, to hear persons vindicate or excuse certain sects, by alleging, that they do not in fact differ materially in doctrine or usages from the Church of England; as if such disagreement were the sole measure of the fault: whereas in fact there may be sometimes perhaps even less blame incurred by those whose opinions are

chargeable indeed with error, but are such as manifestly preclude them from conscientiously joining in our communion, than by those who violate the peace of the Church, when they might have preserved it, without offence to their conscience. To extenuate the charge of heresy, is often to aggravate that of schism.

The well-known contests in the Church respecting the time for the observance of Easter, and the use of leavened or of unleavened bread for the celebration of the Lord's supper, are deplorable instances of the tendency of mankind towards that kind of party-spirit we are speaking of. And let it be remembered, that these and similar cases are not to be contemplated with mere wonder and censure, but regarded as warnings to ourselves. We may often be guilty of cherishing the very same *spirit* with those to whose *principles* we are the most decidedly opposed. The misconduct and folly to which we are tempted never appears such to ourselves at the time; but we may be enabled to see it in its true light by contemplating the operation of similar principles in others; especially in those who lived so long ago, that time

has worn off the gloss which concealed from themselves the deformity of their faults. But if we fail to recollect that human nature is still essentially the same as it has ever been, we shall miss the important benefit to be derived from contemplating the errors of another.

Societies indeed may innocently be formed and supported by Christians without any such cogent necessity, and that for purposes connected with religion, provided no *opposition* be implied: but let the members of them be ever on their guard, (keeping in view those universal propensities of human nature which have been just mentioned,) lest the evils of party-spirit should arise out of institutions originally harmless. A double care therefore is in such cases necessary, to keep in check that carnal mind which leads to “envying, and strife, and divisions.”

3. Lastly, the self-confident and uncharitable bigotry which was mentioned as characterizing party-spirit, must be repressed by the most earnest endeavours, and most fervent prayers, for the Christian virtues of humility and of

charity : nor must we ever forget that our being on the right side will be no security against the want of these virtues. We must not suppose that the stern bigotry with which the Romanists are charged is to be wholly imputed to their Church's claim to infallibility ; it is not so much the effect as the cause of that claim : that Church did but sanction, and organize, and as it were regularly cultivate, those errors which spontaneously spring up and flourish, as in their natural soil, in the corrupt and carnal mind of the natural man<sup>f</sup>.

Let it be remembered also, that openness to conviction, and readiness to make allowance for those in error, are not incompatible with the most sincere belief in the truth, and the warmest zeal for its propagation. In fact, a disdain of hearing arguments on both sides, and a bold condemnation of those who differ from us, are no credit to our cause ; since they are at least as likely to be arrayed on the side of a false religion ; whereas it is the character of truth to bear discussion ; it is the spirit of the Gospel

<sup>f</sup> See Origin of Romish Errors,

to be long-suffering, and loth to form harsh judgments.

But besides those more unchristian feelings which lead to the fault in question, it frequently happens also, that a rash and arrogant confidence arises principally from mere ignorance, thoughtlessness, and inexperience. Those who have been long accustomed to attentive observation and deep reflection, will have often detected errors in systems which at first sight appeared unexceptionable; and will have been many times startled by unexpected objections; hence they in time acquire an habitual cautiousness in forming and maintaining their opinions; a cautiousness indeed, which, in feeble or ill-regulated minds, is apt to end in excessive scepticism. A defect accordingly of this cautiousness prevails in those who are inexperienced and unpractised in diligent investigation; and leads them to an excess of undoubting confidence.

There is a kind of indolence also, (the Greek historian expresses it most precisely by the word *ἀταλαιπώρια*), which often leads to the same



result. To “prove all things, and hold fast only that which is right,” is too troublesome a task to many; who are accordingly contented to adopt a whole system of doctrines and sentiments, in the mass; to maintain it dogmatically, and refuse to hear any thing that can be urged on the other side. To believe as a certain Church believes,—to hold *all* the tenets of a certain party, or theological school,—is a compendious creed, which does not much tax a man’s intellects or his industry.

This presumption then, and this indolence in the search after truth, must be guarded against, by those who would preserve Christian candour.

It is not however meant to be insinuated, that of *all*, even the humblest, believers, it is to be expected that they shall be prepared to discuss, profoundly and learnedly, every article of their faith, and to answer satisfactorily every objection. Those who want either the capacity or the opportunity, for so qualifying themselves, (who must ever constitute a great majority of believers,) should abstain (as indeed every man should abstain) from discussing questions of

which they are not competent judges; and should follow, in them, with humble and honest simplicity of heart, the direction of the best guide they can find; using however the best of their own judgment, as far as their qualifications extend, and fervently praying for spiritual aid. But of those who profess to be supporters, defenders, or teachers of their faith, candid inquiry, and openness to conviction may on all points fairly be expected. Not that they should be always wavering in faith, and sceptical; but always “ready to give, to every one that asketh them, a reason of the hope that is in them;” which implies that they should be ready candidly to *hear* reason also. They should cultivate then an humble, and sincere, and earnest desire of truth; not maintaining what they have not honestly ascertained, nor too much forgetting the investigator, in the advocate<sup>g</sup>. Above all, let nothing unfair and uncandid,—no sophistry or misrepresentation, be enlisted in the holy cause of truth; to which it will, in the end, do more dishonour and detriment than service.

<sup>g</sup> Elements of Logic, b. iv. ch. 3.

Let us not hire the Syrians to fight the Lord's battles<sup>h</sup>. And finally, remembering that Charity not only "is not puffed up," but also "thinketh no evil," we must be careful to do no injustice, nor shew any unnecessary harshness, to our opponents.

The consideration however which we ought to have for those who differ from us, and the principles on which we should regulate our judgment concerning them, and our treatment of them, will form the subject of the next and succeeding lectures; in the former of which I propose to speak of the cautions requisite to avoid dealing hardly with those who may not be deserving of blame; and in the latter, of the charity, tempered with discretion, which we are bound to shew towards the culpable.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Chron. xvi. 2, 3.

## LECTURE IV.

ALLOWABLE DIFFERENCE AMONG CHRISTIANS.

---

ROM. xiv. 13.

*Let us not therefore judge one another any more :  
but judge this rather, that no man put a stum-  
bling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's  
way.*

IN the passage before us, and likewise in several others, (especially in the first Epistle to the Corinthians,) the Apostle Paul labours most earnestly to guard his converts from condemning too hastily or too severely, those who differ from them, in any point which does not call for such harshness and judgment ;—from founding hostile parties on such grounds of difference ;—and

from offending and shocking the consciences of their brethren by conduct which may be in itself harmless. With this view he strongly represents to them the comparative insignificance of many of their causes of dissension;—their agreement in the essential and fundamental points;—the diversity, and even inequality, both of the natural and of the spiritual gifts, bestowed on different individuals;—and the forbearance and consideration to which all the members of Christ's Body are entitled from each other.

It is proposed then in the present lecture (in pursuance of the design formerly laid down) to offer some remarks on the cautions we should observe in our judgment and treatment of those who really or apparently differ from us, without being at all, or in any high degree, blameable; that we may avoid the mischiefs arising from unmerited or excessive censure;—from an over-scrupulous requisition of complete uniformity in all points;—or from any other want of consideration for the allowable differences among Christians. This deficiency of forbearance and of discretion is of course often found in those who have not taken due pains to keep themselves

free from error, in doctrine and practice; and is in them a heavy aggravation of those errors: but it must be remembered, that the same fault may be committed by such as are themselves correct; and it will be necessary to proceed on the hypothesis, that this is the case with those to whom these cautions are addressed; because each man must, of course, in his own opinion, possess this advantage; and since his own sentiments cannot but appear to *him* the most correct, no one could apply to himself cautions which proceeded on the supposition of his being in error.

Supposing then our own system of doctrines and maxims to be correct, what are the dangers of our condemning others unfairly?

I. The first and most obvious, and perhaps most common, of these is, the danger of mistaking their meaning;—attributing to them such notions and sentiments as they do not really entertain;—and thus perhaps regarding with bitter hostility those who may not in reality differ from us at all. How common a source of dissension this is, seems to be indicated by the use of the word *misunderstanding*, as applied to

disagreements in general; as if the ordinary cause of these was, the parties not rightly apprehending each other's meaning. These mistakes then may arise, either from men's misinterpreting the expressions employed by others; or reasoning from them in a different manner, so as to regard them as leading to conclusions which the others do not admit; or from their associating in their own minds the sentiments professed, with others with which they have no necessary connexion, but which are supposed always to go along with them, and to be entertained by the same persons.

To this last kind of mistake those are especially liable who have accustomed themselves to maintain an entire system or *set* of opinions and maxims, in the mass, without any separate examination of the merits of each; and who have associated principally with such as proceed on the same indiscriminate plan, of adopting or rejecting collectively all the tenets of each party. Such persons naturally calculate on finding a similar disposition in all others; and if they meet with any one who maintains a single doctrine (in itself perhaps unimportant) which belongs to the system of some suspected party or sect, they

at once regard him as holding the entire system, and belonging to the party. And though there may be no natural or necessary connexion between the opinion in question and the rest,—nay though he may expressly disavow them,—still they will often have so indissolubly associated the two ideas in their own minds, that it will seem to them no less incredible, that any one should hold the one opinion, and not the rest, than if they followed demonstrably from each other.

It may be said indeed, and with some degree of truth, that since parties and systems do exist, this mode of judging is allowable; since there is at least a strong presumption, that he who maintains one of the characteristic tenets of a sect, belongs to that sect; and, listening to the same instructors as the rest, has adopted, as men usually do, the same principles with them, throughout. Few accordingly would doubt that a person who held the doctrine, for instance, of works of supererogation, held also that of the corporal-presence; though there is no natural connexion between the two; only they are both among the distinguishing tenets of the Romish



Church. But it must be remembered that *presumptions*, though they may afford more or less strong grounds of *suspicion*, are not to be construed into decisive *proofs*; they may be sufficient perhaps to put a man, as it were, upon his *trial*; yet not enough to *convict* him of error. If every coincidence in any point with the sentiments of a party whom we think erroneous, is at once to authorize the conclusion, that the coincidence extends to all other points likewise, it is evident that we are proceeding on the supposition, not merely that *some* men adopt opinions in the mass, but that *none discriminate*; —not only that parties exist, but that *every man* is to be reckoned among the devoted members of one or another.

Such probably were among the uncharitable and rash judgments which Paul so strongly condemns. Nothing can be more natural than that those among the early converts who observed certain days, and abstained from certain meats, should be censured as Judaizers and heretics; —their opponents rashly inferring, that they agreed altogether with those who adhered to the ceremonial law, and who, trusting for salvation to the

works of the Mosaic institution, had, virtually, cast off their faith in Christ. That this however was in some cases an unfounded and unjust inference, we have the express authority of the Apostle himself. It were to be wished that we had to search far in ecclesiastical history for instances of similar injustice: but it is to be feared that such take place every day. One perhaps of the most remarkable is to be found in the readiness with which some Arminian divines impute a complete adoption of all the tenets of the Calvinistic school, even to those who expressly renounce them, if in their explanation of any one doctrine they appear in any degree to take the same view of the subject with Calvin, or with any of his followers. It may be that their views are erroneous: so, as Paul implies, were the scrupulous observances of the weak brethren among the Romans and Corinthians: still, a person's holding one error does not authorize us to impute others to him. It may be that there is a Calvinistic party, who maintain, as such, a complete system of doctrines, and adhere to them with indiscriminate bigotry: still we have no right to conclude, that

no one who in any respect coincides with them, can be exempt from the full spirit of that party. It may be even that the doctrines in question appear to *us* to follow logically from the one maintained; still we have no right to charge with those consequences one who disavows them; since it surely is but common charity to regard him as inconsistent, rather than wholly erroneous;—as a bad reasoner, rather than a heretic. For as it is notoriously common for men to be so inconsistent as not to admit the *true* conclusions which follow from the principles they hold, it is no great stretch of credulity to suppose that they may sometimes be equally inconsistent with respect to false conclusions also.

As for the Calvinistic questions themselves, it would be foreign to our present purpose to enter into any discussion of them: but it must be acknowledged, that that want of charity which has been just described is too often to be found on both sides; and that some Calvinistic divines have been but too ready to attribute to such as do not coincide with their peculiar views, the rejection or neglect of the great doctrine of the atonement, and other essential parts of the

Gospel-scheme, even when there has been no ground for such a charge, except that such are the notions of the Socinians, who are also *among* their opponents, and to whose system it is thence presumed, *all* their opponents must incline.

We may indeed point out to any one the danger of the doctrines he maintains, in case *others* should deduce from them such conclusions as appear to us to follow: but even this must be done with great caution. It is indeed, in itself, an allowable mode of arguing against any doctrine, to shew that it necessarily leads, or even may be understood to lead, to absurd and mischievous consequences: and where this can fairly be done, our procedure cannot justly be complained of by our *opponent himself*; but it should be remembered that it is not to *him* alone we are responsible for any evil we may by this means occasion, either to him or to others. We must therefore, in every case, weigh carefully the practical good and ill effects likely to result, on each side, before we resolve on adopting this mode of confutation. For it will often happen, that men may thus be led actually to adopt and support false doctrines, which originally

they never thought of, when it can be made clear to them that these are inevitable consequences of their principles: they may be so bigoted to these, that rather than renounce the premises, they will admit the conclusion; and thus will have been driven into heresy by imprudent opposition. Nor is it always enough to say, that this is their *own fault*; our culpability is not the less, if we have been the occasion of the fault. The Apostle Paul says, "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Here it is implied that he must himself be in fault; else he could not be doomed to *perish*; but does this exculpate the others? By no means: "When," says he, "ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."

Let not then the heresies, into which any persons have subsequently fallen, be deemed of itself a sufficient proof that their meaning was not in the first instance mistaken, and that the charges brought against them were not originally unjust<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> There seems good reason for suspecting that this took place in the case of the Arian heresy at its first origin; and still more, in that of Nestorius.

And let those who would guard against needless controversy, and all the other evils of party-spirit, use every precaution against mistaking, in any way, another's meaning; and thus running the risk both of judging harshly one who may not deserve it, and of creating the very heresy they impute. Let the most candid and favourable construction possible be put on every profession, till we are compelled to understand it otherwise; where the case will allow of it, let blame be laid rather on the form of expression, than on the doctrine intended to be conveyed; let us in each case, endeavour to *begin* by ascertaining points of *agreement*, rather than of *difference*; and lastly, where it is manifest that incorrect notions *are* entertained, let it always be considered whether they may not be attributed rather to weakness of intellect, and inaptitude for accurate statements, than to culpable perversion of the truth.

II. For besides the danger of doing injustice to others by imputing to them doctrines which they do not hold, another fault which is to be guarded against, is that of not making due

allowance for our weak brethren. Notions, not so much erroneous, as imperfect and inadequate, and those too, imperfectly and inadequately expressed, must be expected from those of feeble understanding, or of uncultivated mind; who may nevertheless, for their honest endeavours after improvement in religious knowledge,—their sincere faith, and diligent obedience,—be accepted by Him in whose sight the wisest and ablest are but mere weakness and ignorance. It behoves us therefore to use the utmost care that we confound not intellectual deficiencies with heretical perversity of will; and that we neither harshly condemn, nor perplex and mislead, those of humbler abilities.

Will it be said, that the Christian faith being one, all who are to be saved by it must hold the same? and that the Gospel being a revelation to all mankind, and especially to the poor and weak, all must be required to take the same view of it? If by this is meant, that every thing is placed within the reach of each man's capacity that is requisite for his *own* salvation, this is undoubtedly true, and does not at all invalidate what has been just said. But if it be meant,

that all Christians are on a level in point of intellectual advantages, or that the most acute and most learned can understand no more of the Gospel-scheme, than the dullest and most illiterate, such a notion is contradicted by Scripture, no less than by common sense and experience. The parable of the talents proves that, in some respects at least, all Christians are not placed on a level; and that though all are bound to improve their gifts to the utmost, more will be required of those to whom more is given. And Paul's exhortation to "receive him that is *weak in the faith*, but not to doubtful disputations," and his repeated and earnest recommendations of forbearance towards weak brethren, as well as his mention of babes in Christ, who must be "fed with milk and not with strong meat," sufficiently prove, if proof be needed, that feebleness of understanding, or backwardness in knowledge, may be expected to make the faith of some more imperfect than that of others; and that a tender consideration for such infirmities is to be expected from the abler and more advanced Christian.

Those indeed whose defect is ignorance, should



be exhorted to learn ; and if they fall short of that right understanding and full comprehension of the Gospel-scheme, which they *might* have acquired, they may justly be admonished of their fault in contenting themselves with imperfect, superficial, and inaccurate views, when a more complete and correct faith was within their reach. But still it is neither just nor expedient to confound even this blameable backwardness in religious wisdom,—this slender proficiency, and, as it were, childhood in faith,—with decided rejection of the true faith. It is not only more charitable, but every way more prudent, to treat them as imperfect believers, rather than as obstinate heretics. There is danger, if they are abruptly and severely thus charged, that they may be led, even by what we say, to suppose *that* to be a distinct mode of faith, which in fact is rather a deficiency of faith ; and may be partly alarmed, partly provoked, and partly flattered, into embodying, maintaining, and propagating, as a peculiar system, what is merely the result of their own slight and inaccurate acquaintance with Scripture. These therefore should rather be commended for whatever they have already

attained of a right faith, and encouraged to proceed further. We should point out and dwell on, our agreement with them, as far as they have gone in laying a right foundation; and endeavour to build on that the complete superstructure. The Apostle Paul's discourse to the Athenians affords an admirable example of this temperate and judicious procedure<sup>b</sup>.

But with respect to those whose capacity is weak, or who have an inaptitude for expressing themselves with precision and regularity, great care must be used that we neither censure them unfairly, nor unnecessarily alarm and dishearten them, nor perplex them with statements above their comprehension. For in the first place there are some whose faith is by no means itself very deficient, but who (either from nature or education) are utterly incapable of giving any thing approaching to a clear and systematic account of the doctrines they really hold. And besides this, there are also many whose notions

<sup>b</sup> The force of this address is in a great degree lost in our translation, which renders *Δεισιδαιμονεστέρους* by "too superstitious," instead of "very much addicted to the veneration of divine Beings."

are in themselves very confused, indistinct, and inadequate, compared with those of the more intelligent and better instructed; and yet these notions, if they are the best they have the power to acquire,—if held in humble and sincere piety,—and if bringing forth the fruits of personal holiness,—may constitute a very sufficient and saving faith to themselves. Such persons may, by rash censures of the incorrectness of their belief, and imprudent requisitions of assent to precise metaphysical statements, suited to a different class of intellects, be brought to believe themselves heretics; and may thus be either cast into a fatal despondency, or perhaps tempted to enlist under the banner of some heterodox teacher, who holds out to them a more flattering prospect.

And let it not be doubted that under such circumstances, very indistinct notions, and a very inadequate statement of them, (though highly culpable in those of better abilities and opportunities,) may be sufficient for these babes in Christ, till, by the patient and *gradual* instruction which we are bound to afford, their minds become more enlarged, their mode of

thinking in some degree regulated, and their capacity for religious knowledge, together with the knowledge itself, progressively increased. How imperfect is the knowledge of a peasant respecting the process of germination in the seed which he sows,—the growth of the plant,—and its fructification! and how confused and imperfect an account would he in general give, even of the little he does understand! Yet his practical knowledge is sufficient to enable him to prepare the soil for the reception of the seed, to raise the corn to maturity, and to gather in the harvest. How little did the ancient mariners understand of the magnitude, and distance, and motions, of the heavenly bodies! Yet by these they were enabled to steer their course in safety. So also may the word of God be “a lantern to our steps and a light unto our paths,” even though we may have but a very imperfect understanding of the divine dispensations. And as the knowledge of the humblest peasant respecting the operations of nature in the vegetable kingdom, bears a greater proportion to that of the ablest philosophers, than theirs does, to a full and perfect understanding of these mysterious

processes ; so also does the religious knowledge of the wisest and most learned, fall much more short, (not only of a perfect understanding of God's dealings, but) even of what he may himself hope to understand in a better world, when he "shall know even as also he is known," than the faith of the humblest believer does, of his. And as the strongest intellect may be bewildered by prying too deeply into the counsels of the most High, and seeking to explain what is, to man, in his present state, inexplicable ; so, persons of inferior powers and attainments may be led, not to knowledge, but to error, by hastily proposing to them such statements and explanations as surpass their capacity ; though they may be intelligible and instructive to the abler and more advanced. No vain clamours therefore about deceiving the people,—no groundless charges of keeping the vulgar in ignorance, and preaching a different gospel to different persons, should deter us from following, at once the dictates of sound sense, and the example of the Apostle Paul ; or induce us so to perplex and confuse "those who are weak in the faith," as really to incur the blame of deceiving them,

for the sake of avoiding the appearance of it.

For it should be remembered that, practically speaking, all truth is relative. That which may be to one man a true statement of any doctrine, may be, in effect, false, to another, if it be such as cannot but lead him to form false notions; and that which gives him, if not a perfectly correct notion of things as they are, yet the nearest to this that he is capable of, may be regarded as, to him, true. Such is the account given in the book of Joshua, of the sun's being made to stand still: had a more correct statement of the fact, according to the Copernican system, been given, it would have been (to those whom it was addressed to) unintelligible.

Thus also, angels may perhaps perceive both deficiencies and misapprehensions in the faith of the wisest of men: and there are, we are told, mysteries, which even "the angels desire to look into."

While we endeavour then cautiously and gradually to promote the advancement both of ourselves and others, we must beware of hastily taxing with wilful blindness those whose views

are limited only by the lowness of their position : as they rise in abilities and attainments, the horizon will gradually widen around them, and a larger and larger prospect will be spread before their eyes of the boundless extent of divine wisdom and perfection.

III. But besides those mental differences among Christians which have been now mentioned, there are others also, which imply no *inequality*, but which require to be no less carefully attended to, by those who would judge fairly of all their brethren. Mutual censure, jealousy, or contempt, bringing in their train all the evils of party, will often be engendered in the first instance by contrarieties of *natural temperament* ; or varieties of acquired tastes and feelings ; where neither side is deserving of blame, except in not making due allowance for the other.

Among the early Christians, and particularly in the Corinthian Church, much dissension and uncharitableness seems to have arisen from a kind of rivalry among those who possessed different supernatural endowments : and accordingly,

Paul, in his earnest exhortations to concord, finds it necessary to dwell very strongly on arguments which to us at the present day are apt perhaps to appear too obvious to need being insisted on. He remarks, that though there are diversities of gifts, they all proceed from “one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will;”—that this diversity is expedient for the welfare of the whole body, in the same manner as the diversity of offices of the different members is to the natural body;—that they have one supreme head, even Christ, “one faith, one baptism, one hope of their calling;”—and finally, that charity is of more value than all their miraculous gifts together. In these days there are indeed no supernatural gifts; but there is hardly perhaps less diversity. In natural or habitual tempers and qualifications, men are as different (and as likely to disagree in consequence of that difference) as the Corinthians. Men differ in mind as much as in form and features; their intellects vary in kind, probably more than in degrees of excellence; and their tastes and feelings, perhaps more still. Some are calm and sedate; others have strong



and lively feelings; and of these last, some are more inclined to be vehement and impetuous; others, more tender and gentle; some again are cheerful and sanguine; others, grave, serious, and decisive,—others, timorous and melancholy: and in respect of intellectual character also, some are chiefly remarkable as accurate thinkers and clear reasoners, while others possess a more lively and brilliant imagination: with innumerable other such varieties.

Nothing perhaps has ever been written on this subject more satisfactory than Cicero's judicious and elegant treatise in the first book of the *Offices*: in which he describes in a masterly manner several varieties of natural character; remarking, that none of these being intrinsically faulty, each man ought to conform to his own nature, provided he keeps within due bounds,—that the same conduct may be suitable and proper for one individual, which might be unbecoming, and consequently wrong, for another, under similar circumstances,—and that no one therefore should be found fault with for not coinciding precisely in all points with another, however excellent that other may be. These

observations are as applicable now as ever : for let it not be supposed that they concern the heathen world only, or are to be applied in the *secular* affairs alone, of Christians ; and that all Christians, as such, are required to be precisely similar. Our religion was designed to renew indeed and ameliorate, but not to subvert our nature ;—to amend mankind in general,—but not to contradict the essential principles of the human character ;—to exalt and purify each individual,—but not to destroy his individuality. Whatever points are faulty indeed, must be corrected by our religion, or it will not have done its proper work ; but many differences of taste and temper will still remain, which will give a certain tinge even to the religion itself of each man,—which are nowise hurtful, but may even be rendered serviceable to the general cause,—and which ought no more to be made a source of mutual jealousy and of dissension, than the diversity of spiritual gifts among the early Christians.

A remarkable proof of this, if any be needed, is to be found in the differences of style in the writers of the New Testament. If any thing

can be supposed likely to assimilate in the greatest degree, men originally different, it would surely be their being not only devoted to the same great cause, the propagation of the Gospel, but also all of them supernaturally qualified for that work, by the inspiration of the same Spirit : yet it may be questioned whether even any profane writers, who agree in general principles, exhibit in their manner of writing a greater diversity of natural character than these do, in their general cast of sentiments and manner of thinking ; and this, to such a degree as to be still very perceptible even through the disguise of a translation. What man of judgment, well versed in the rest of the New Testament, if we suppose him by some accident to have remained ignorant of some one of Paul's epistles, would be likely, when that epistle should be put before him, to mistake it for one of John's ? yet the same Spirit was at hand to lead into all truth both these writers ; it was one Gospel which was preached by both ; as well as by Peter and the other apostles ; who yet differ in their *manner* of inculcating the same fundamental doctrines, from both those above-mentioned, and from

each other. Nay, the peculiarities of manner in Peter and John especially, coincide remarkably with the differences of their respective tempers and dispositions, as depicted in the Gospels, and in the book of Acts. We recognize in the writings of the one Apostle the vehemence and forward zeal which characterized him, though the weakness which had formerly blemished his character, was removed: while the epistles of the other breathe that peculiar spirit of tender and fervent love, together with a remarkable simplicity of character, which are precisely what we should expect from "the beloved disciple." And in Paul's writings again, we find that singular warmth of feeling, and unconquerable energy, which characterized the conscientious persecutor, though these had received a new direction from divine inspiration, and were modified in the Apostle by the mild spirit of the Gospel.

And if we would seek for yet further proofs of the same point, we may find them in the varieties of style which characterize the different Prophets.

In fact, what has been now observed is no

more than one illustration out of many, of the truth of the maxim, that miracles were not wrought unnecessarily. It was requisite for the propagation of the Gospel in its purity, and for the edification of the infant Church, that the holy Spirit should “lead the Apostles into all [the] truth,” and should pour out other supernatural gifts on other Christians; so far therefore did his influence extend<sup>c</sup>: but it was *not* requisite that all individuality and distinction of character among Christians should be done away, where these peculiarities had no evil in them; or that similar spiritual gifts should be bestowed on all. Here therefore the diversity was both permitted and even augmented. This divine work may be compared to that which took place “in the beginning:” “God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very *good* ;” but all things were not made *alike*; the *variety* in the creation is infinite.

But as the Christian’s life is designed to be a

<sup>c</sup> These considerations may serve to expose the fallacy of which those are guilty, who, from the appearance of such diversities as have been here mentioned, argue against the inspiration of the sacred writers.

state of discipline, those on whom extraordinary gifts were bestowed, were of course left at liberty either to make a right use of them, or to abuse them in various ways; and among others, by making them a source of pride, of jealousy, and of party-spirit. The same is the case with all the natural gifts which men now enjoy, and with all the diversities of character which exist among them. Much as we may wonder at the envy, and strife, and mutual prejudice, which existed at Corinth or at Rome, similar injustice is practised every day, in no less a degree. For how common is it for those of an ardent disposition and lively feelings (which temper will of course shew itself in their religion, if they are duly impressed with it) to censure, as cold formalists, destitute of a spiritual mind, and of all true zeal and devotion, those who have not the same fervent and rapturous emotions as their own; and among these, many, who, though they have a calmer and cooler temperament, and less exalted sentiments, yet possess a piety no less sincere, deep-rooted, and practical; and “love the Lord their God with all their heart,” though that heart be not susceptible of such

vivid and intense feeling as another's. These last, on the contrary, are but too apt, while they value themselves on being rational and sober-minded, to brand too hastily the other class, as visionary enthusiasts, and fanatics. Again, some have a peculiarly strong perception of the beauties and sublimities of sentiment and expression in the sacred writings; and do not merely assent to their infallible truth, but *feel* their divine character: in their own language too these persons are in general richly figurative,—powerful in their exhortations,—and deeply affecting the heart of those whose disposition is like their own: these are often derided as empty, fanciful, and unsound, by calm and close, and severe reasoners, who have but little liveliness of imagination, or sensibility of taste: and who themselves, in turn, are often contemned by the former, as no more than dry scholastic theologians, who have nothing of the spirit of the Gospel.

Some again shew in religious concerns an active, forward, and sanguine temper: others are more steady, quiet, and cautious in their proceedings: and each are but too prone to

depreciate the others ; the one, as officious and unsafe characters, the other, as lukewarm and destitute of zeal.

Similar observations might be made with respect to a multitude of such cases, in which, either from nature or education, the temper and turn of mind of one man will materially differ from another's ; though when duly modified and regulated, neither will be in any degree blameable ; but will rather conduce to the benefit of the whole Body. Nor have any of those whose gifts are different, either in degree or in kind, just cause either to complain, or to boast of their own lot ;—to envy, or to disdain their neighbour's ; since all have their respective advantages and trials. Yet are these diversities continually occasioning mutual contempt and jealousy, hostile prejudice, and division.

But if (as may be seen in the chapter from which my text is taken) so much tender consideration is due even to the *infirmities* and *mistakes* of our brethren, how much more must it be unchristian to deal hardly with them, where there is in fact *no* infirmity nor fault of any



kind, but merely a difference of taste, temper, or mode of thinking! And since such differences must always exist, what a fruitful source of dissension and party-animosity must that kind of uncharitableness be, which makes no allowance for such differences!

All these peculiarities indeed are liable to run into excess; but this is the case also with the *common and universal* tendencies of human nature; which nevertheless, when duly moderated, are not mischievous, but beneficial.

It should therefore be our care, if we would deal candidly with all, and repress every tendency to party-spirit, to guard against these excesses in ourselves, instead of merely censuring them in others of an opposite character. The extreme of a disposition totally unlike our own, we can detect without any extraordinary acuteness or watchfulness; but *that* is not what most concerns ourselves; to watch our *own* peculiar propensities<sup>d</sup>,—to guard against our own besetting sins,—is both the hardest task, and, to ourselves, incomparably the most important.

It is however one besetting sin of men, of

<sup>d</sup> See Aristotle, Eth. Nicom. b. ii.

almost all dispositions, not to make sufficient allowance for each other; and to be too ready to conclude, when satisfied that they themselves are right, that all who, in any respect, differ from them, must be wrong. Had due caution against this want of charity, and narrow-minded self-estimation, been employed, on both sides, at the times when each schism in the Church was arising, most of them probably would have withered in the bud; had it been employed on *either* side, many of them perhaps would have been speedily suppressed; and at any rate, the party which practised such moderation, would have kept itself free in the sight of God from the sin of uncharitable bigotry.

If we deal with others as we should wish them to deal with us, we shall be using the most likely means indeed to produce a similar conduct in them; but whether we succeed or fail in our endeavours after harmony and *mutual* charity, we shall be approved in *his* sight whose precepts we are fulfilling; who has promised, that if we “judge not, we shall not be judged;” and who bestows on the peace-makers, the blessing of being called his children.

## LECTURE V.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT TOWARDS OPPONENTS.

---

2 TIM. ii. 24, 25.

*The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.*

AFTER pointing out the advantages of that principle of our nature which combines and holds together those whose sentiments and proposed objects are the same, and also its perversions and abuses, it naturally followed, to offer some remarks as to the manner in which this principle should be regulated, and those abuses prevented.

With this view, some cautions were proposed, first as to the discipline and regulation of our own temper, generally, and without any particular reference to the persons who might stand opposed to us: the principles which ought to guide us in our judgment and treatment of others, being reserved for a distinct consideration. And it seemed natural to distribute into two classes all who might, really or apparently, be at variance with us; and to consider first the requisite cautions for guarding against a harsh judgment or injudicious treatment of persons, either not at all, or in no high degree culpable;—whose difference from ourselves might be either not real, or not blameable, or unimportant; (which was the object of the last discourse;) treating afterwards (as is proposed at present) of the conduct to be observed towards those whom we cannot but conclude to be essentially erroneous.

In treating of this subject, it will not be necessary for the purpose now in hand to bestow a separate consideration on the two evils of Heresy and Schism; which, though in themselves distinct, are usually found together,—

have a natural tendency mutually to generate each other,—and are each of them, for the most part, the more readily cured after the removal of the other. Both are faults; and the remarks which I am about to offer will apply alike to both.

To determine however what errors are to be regarded as essential, and to adduce arguments in confutation of them, would be foreign to the plan originally laid down; which was to point out and guard against the faults of the orthodox, rather than of the heterodox, and to suggest proper cautions against that most frequent self-delusion, which persuades men, that since their own creed is correct, and the opposite party are in the wrong, they themselves must be irreproachable. The Apostle Paul plainly shews, by his earnest and repeated admonitions both in the epistle now before us, and in many others, that, though far removed from that latitudinarian liberality of sentiment which regards all modes of faith with indifference, and though as zealous for the purity as for the propagation of the Gospel, yet he was fully sensible what disgrace and detriment to the good cause was likely to

result, from the injudicious conduct, or unchristian violence, of its supporters. He warns both Timothy and his other converts, that heresies and schisms must be expected to arise in the Christian Church;—that these were among the trials by which it has pleased God that man should be exercised and disciplined here below;—and that we are to guard against the danger, not only of adopting false doctrines, but also of falling short of the requisite discretion and charity, in defending the truth: he expands, in short, and enforces the admonition of our Lord, that his followers being “sent forth as sheep among wolves,” (which in a greater or less degree must ever be the case, as long as his sincere disciples have any concern with those who are not such,) it is requisite for them to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” While therefore they are firm in adhering to the truth, they must be careful not to impede its progress by maintaining it indiscreetly;—and while they guard against the danger of sacrificing any part of their faith for the sake of conciliation, they must nevertheless “be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, and patient.”

It is indeed most necessary for every one who would do good service to the cause of true religion, that he should not only be acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, but also with the nature of Man;—that he should be watchful, not only to keep his own faith pure, but also to win over others, by the most patient and well-timed, and conciliatory instruction;—and should be fully aware, not only of the faults he is to guard against in himself, but also of those which he must expect to meet with in his opponents. Whoever understands human nature, will be prepared to find in many men, not only erroneous opinions, but other faults also, independent of those errors; and must shape his own conduct accordingly. Such are those excesses which have been described in the foregoing discourses; and which are not essentially connected either with a right or a wrong faith, but will occasionally be met with in all men.

We must calculate on finding in our opponents, Party-spirit, in all its various degrees and modes of deformity; and without withholding our reprobation from the principle itself, or neglecting to counteract it, we must make all

charitable allowance for an infirmity so natural, and from which many of those whose faith is right are so far from being exempt. Bitter Resentment of opposition must also be looked for; especially from those who have been opposed with bitterness; however just the condemnation of their tenets. We must expect too to encounter that Pride which will not endure the appearance of concession: and, in the adroit and practised disputant, that love of Controversy, which keeps up a debate for the sake of displaying argumentative skill, and aims more at victory than at truth. All these faults, which we are now considering how to encounter in our opponents, have been already noticed, with a view to the cautions requisite for avoiding them in ourselves; and it cannot be too strongly impressed on our minds, that since they all tend to engender the like faults on the opposite side, those who are themselves the most guilty of them, and the most ready to tolerate or encourage them in their own party, will usually meet with the most of them in their adversaries;—and that consequently, to cultivate candour, gentleness, modesty, and aversion to controversy,



in ourselves, and in those cooperating with us, is the most likely way to lead “those that oppose themselves,” to do the same. It may be desirable however to lay down some additional cautions with a view to each of these points, separately, for regulating in the best manner our treatment of those in error: it being often useful to distribute the remarks that are to be made, under different heads, even where these are (as in the present instance) so closely connected, as not to admit of any very nice distinction between the observations brought forward under each.

I. First then, with regard to the spirit of party, which may exist, or may be likely to arise, in our opponents; we must bear in mind, that it is in general much easier to *break and disperse* a hostile body than to *overwhelm* it. A common pressure may rather tend to consolidate the mass, which might have been shattered by well-directed blows. Men may even be driven to make common cause with those from whom they materially differ in many points, for the sake of repelling a *common* attack. And, as was formerly remarked, persons not destitute of good sense have often been led, in

the eagerness of a contest, to embrace such erroneous notions of their party, as they would have rejected, if singly proposed to their unbiassed judgment, but which they adopt without examination, when regarded as parts of a system which they have pledged themselves to uphold.

If therefore we are always forward to class together, and oppose *collectively*, all who appear to us to coincide in the objects they propose and the errors they maintain, and if we always take for granted as a matter of course, and impute to them this coincidence, we shall in fact be fostering that spirit of party which is but too apt to spring up spontaneously, and which is so powerful an aid to the cause of falsehood. On the other hand, the more we avoid (where it can be avoided) distinctly recognizing the existence of a party, and enrolling among its members all who in our judgment may be suspected of properly belonging to it, the less firmly and heartily united, and the less numerous, shall we find that party. When, in short, we have to contend both against heretical doctrine and party-spirit, each affording strength to the other, the wisest way will be to combat these two evils *separately*;—

first to endeavour by all fair means to dissolve or weaken the union of those who are banded together against the truth; and thus to assail error on more fair terms, unsupported by extrinsic aids. And not only should that fault be guarded against, which was mentioned in the last discourse, of falsely attributing to any one an *entire* adoption of all the tenets of a party, from his *partial* coincidence with it, but we should not even be over-ready to point out such coincidences in error as really exist; but rather draw the attention of our opponents to the discrepancies existing among themselves; and mark out the variety of the devious paths into which those have strayed, who have once wandered from the truth. It is neither wise nor just to allow those who differ considerably from each other in their erroneous tenets, to derive mutual support and encouragement in those errors from supposing their mutual coincidence in doctrine to be greater than it is. And even in those points wherein they do coincide, as we cannot be bound in duty to dwell upon that coincidence, (since it is even more fair that each opinion should stand on its own merits, and be

tried, independently, by the tests of reason and Scripture) so, neither will it be expedient, in many cases, thus to class together the advocates of an error. For it is not, in general, a likely mode of inducing any one to renounce an opinion, to tell him that it is held by many besides himself; or that it is supported by ancient authority; even of such as were in their time accounted heretical. If indeed an appeal be made to that authority, it will then be requisite to shew that it is not such as ought to be relied on: or again, if our opponent be of a candid and modest temper, he may be led to reconsider, and ultimately to renounce his tenets, if it be proved to him that they have been before broached, and were then condemned by the main Body of Christians. All I am contending for is, that this procedure should not be adopted universally and indiscriminately. Those who are to a certain degree infected with the passion for novelty, yet have not sufficient boldness to be satisfied with standing perfectly alone, will often be more encouraged by the authority of a considerable sect, than overawed by the censure of the majority. And moreover, if we explain to any one that he

is in fact an Arian, a Sabellian, or a Socinian, besides that it will be, in some cases, doubtful whether he is not more likely to be confirmed than shaken in his opinions, there is danger also that he may hereafter be led to advance a step farther, and adopt the entire system of those who furnish him with this confirmation.

As a general rule then, let each false doctrine, and each individual promulgator of it, (when a proper occasion offers,) be opposed *separately*; but let not the orthodox lend their aid to the combining of errors into a system, and of heretics, into a sect. It will generally (where practicable) be found the wisest (as it is for the most part the fairest) plan, to attribute, as far as possible, each erroneous notion that is maintained, to the *individual*, who may chance, on each occasion, to be its advocate, rather than to his party; that *he* may not be led, by us at least, to derive support to his opinions from the authority of others; and that *they* may not feel themselves called upon to regard him as their champion, and to rally in support of a common cause. As long as we make no sacrifice of the truth, nor suffer any heterodoxy to prevail

unrefuted, we need not fear that any one will escape censure who deserves it.

It is prudent however, as well as charitable, to urge even this censure no further than is unavoidable, and to endeavour (where we honestly can) to mitigate the spirit of party in our opponents, by extenuating rather than aggravating the differences between us; which in fact may often be (even when real and essential) yet not so great, as they might be represented. We should not lengthen the distance they have to retrace in order to regain the right path. And not only should the caution be observed which was formerly mentioned, of not too hastily charging any one with such consequences of his doctrines as he distinctly disclaims, but it will often be both the wisest and the fairest procedure, not even to wait for that disclaimer, but to take for granted, where the contrary is not distinctly avowed, that he cannot intend to admit such and such absurd conclusions, which would seem to follow from his principles; erroneous as he may be, in maintaining those principles. In a dispute, for instance, with one whose doctrines may seem decidedly antinomian,

it would be wise to ask him, plainly, but in such a manner as to vindicate our full expectation of an answer in the negative, whether he can really believe that a life of abandoned profligacy is becoming a Christian, or can be persevered in without danger to his eternal welfare; adding, that though his expressions seem to lead to no less, yet it is probable they are so understood by himself as not to imply that inference; and that if he holds it to be false and dangerous, he ought to be cautious not to employ such language as may lead others to it. Again, to the defender of transubstantiation, we might say, “Your account of this Sacrament appears to me fundamentally erroneous; but I cannot conceive any right-minded person to hold, that the observance of this ordinance is in any way beneficial to hardened sinners, who have no purpose of amending their lives, and whose thoughts are not even at the moment engaged in what they are doing,—that it is desirable for such men, so disposed, to partake of the Lord’s supper,—or that they can receive the body and blood of Christ to their souls’ health. If indeed you will distinctly avow such conclusions,

you must stand chargeable with the consequences; but if not, you ought to be very careful to protest against them, and to qualify the statement of a doctrine which may appear to lead to them."

By this procedure, men may often be led, heartily to abjure the mischievous conclusions which are not forced upon them; and may in time perhaps relinquish the principles also which they shall perceive to have this pernicious tendency; or at least will be induced so to modify and explain them as to render their errors comparatively harmless, even though they continue to adhere to them. And it is surely better that they should be inconsistently right, than consistently wrong; and that their hostility to truth should be mitigated, where it cannot be extinguished.

II. With regard to the bitterness and fierce resentment, which are sometimes to be encountered, and always to be apprehended, we must remember that nothing so much tends to excite and aggravate them as the like temper in ourselves; and that consequently it is no less politic



than Christian-like,—no less suitable to the wisdom of the serpent, than the harmlessness of the dove,—to imitate the example of our great Master, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;” and to obey the Apostle Paul’s precept, of being “gentle and patient with all men.” Not that we should bestow no censure on wilful blindness to the truth, or intentional sophistry and misrepresentation: but, as we are bound by the law of that charity “which thinketh no evil” to avoid imputing these faults, where a milder interpretation is admissible, so, where we are compelled to pass a severer censure, it is still requisite to preserve a dignified mildness even in rebuke; and, without undervaluing the importance of a right faith, to shew a tenderness for the *persons* even of those whose faults we condemn; remembering that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;” and that we hope to obtain mercy only on condition of being merciful. “If any man (says Paul<sup>a</sup>) obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed: yet count him not as an enemy, but

<sup>a</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 14.

admonish him as a brother." Above all, let no *personal* resentment be admitted; nor let the indignant feelings of wounded pride for personal affronts, and the desire of taking vengeance for them by triumphant sarcasm, be disguised in the specious garb of zeal for God's honour. Many, I fear, are apt to deceive themselves, by considering as a laudable zeal for the glory of God, what is, in fact, zeal for their own credit.

Nor must the example of our Lord and the Apostles, in their decided, severe, and unqualified condemnation of some offenders, be more closely imitated than the similarity of the cases will warrant. Those only whose judgment is *infallible*, and whose insight into the human heart is supernatural, are authorized to pronounce without reserve or hesitation on the errors, and on the motives, of an opponent.

And whenever unchristian wrath, malignant satire, and bitter reviling, have been employed against those at variance with us, he is the most judicious advocate of true religion, as well as the best exemplifier of its spirit, who is the first to condemn such conduct in his own party. He will thus, both remove the prejudice likely to

arise against doctrines which have been enforced with intemperate violence ; and, by pacifying as far as possible those whom that violence has provoked into resentful obstinacy, may lead them to examine their own tenets calmly,—to weigh the arguments on both sides,—and to renounce the errors with which they are no longer harshly reproached.

To this end, we should not only avoid and condemn all bitterness of invective, but also take every fit opportunity to express friendly feelings, and use mild and conciliatory language, towards our adversaries ; giving them credit, where we can with justice, for sincere zeal in the cause of what they regard as the truth, though it be a “ zeal not according to knowledge ;” and manifesting, not scorn and hatred, and insolent exultation, but regret for their errors, and anxiety (on their own account) for their correction.

Care must be taken however not to testify such compassion for the erroneous as savours too much of contempt ; lest mortified pride should harden them against conviction, even more than their resentment of a harsher rebuke.

For pride is one of the most powerful obstacles to a conversion from error, and one whose adverse influence we must be ever watchful to counteract.

Will it be said, that those who indulge this feeling have only themselves to blame? and that if they do not with *humility* seek for truth, they do not *deserve* to attain it? What, alas! would be the fate of the best of us, if no more favour were shewn him than he justly deserved? Who will dare to say, that his own inquiries after truth have always been as diligent, as candid, and as humble, as they could possibly have been; and that he is ready to be tried before God's tribunal on his own merits? Those persons indeed who are too proud to receive the truth when enforced in an arrogant style, and are ashamed to renounce errors with which they have been contemptuously taunted,—such persons, I say,—have, *themselves*, perhaps no right to lay blame on us: but will not *He* justly condemn us who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,”—who so patiently laboured to convert the arrogant and self-sufficient from their errors,—and who sent his apostles to

preach remission of sins, even to those who had crucified their Master? May not *He* fairly expect that we should bear with the frowardness of our brethren, for *his* sake, who, faultless himself, deigned to set us an example of humility, long-suffering, and unwearied benevolence?

It is not indeed requisite, nor would it be justifiable, to sanction and encourage the faults of any one. We are not called upon to approve or to foster the pride of our opponents. But we are far from doing this, when we are merely using precautions not to offend and provoke it: on the contrary, such forbearance has an obvious tendency to allay it. The less the wound is chafed, the more likely it is to heal.

With this view, not only should a scornful deportment towards our opponents be avoided, but all opportunities should be taken of testifying our assent to whatever may be right in their tenets, and our respect for whatever is laudable in their characters. And full allowance should be made for the magnitude of the difficulties on which they may have stumbled, and the strength of the arguments which may have contributed to mislead them. In no case more

clearly than in this, do expediency and justice coincide<sup>b</sup>. For since, in matters not admitting of demonstration, not only apparent, but real probabilities may exist,—not only specious, but valid arguments may be adduced,—on opposite sides,—and since even unanswerable objections may be brought against conclusions, which are nevertheless true, and which are to be established by the *preponderance* of evidence,—it is plainly both equitable and prudent, to admit the full force of an adversary's reasons; without which indeed it is impossible satisfactorily to answer them. To treat his arguments as frivolous and childish, and his conclusions as palpable absurdities, will be more likely to pique his pride in defending them, than to open his ears to conviction. Men are usually more ashamed to acknowledge and renounce an alleged absurdity, than to maintain it; especially when they think (as is usually the case) that something plausible may be urged in its defence. The by-stander too will often be prejudiced against the cause of those who shall appear to have triumphed too

<sup>b</sup> Elements of Rhetoric, Part I. ch. iii. § 7.

insolently, and too hastily; and will be led, from perceiving that the absurdity has been overstated, to overlook it altogether.

It should also be remembered, that since men are usually no less jealous of *names* than of things, and their pride revolts at formal concessions, and at distinct acknowledgments of error, it is wise as well as charitable to shew some indulgence towards this infirmity; by sometimes leading them obliquely, as it were, to the admission of the truth;—by allowing them to explain as they will (where they manifest a disposition to concede) their own expressions, even though these may not be in themselves the most correct;—and by not insisting, when the substance of the truth is secured, on their adopting, in every case, that form of stating it at which they have taken offence. If we would hope for such forbearance towards our own frailties as may not be inconsistent with justice, we must not deny the same to our erring brethren.

But when we see the members of any Church or Body of men, coming forward to modify and soften down some objectionable tenets, or virtually to abandon some of the worst practices

that have prevailed among them,—as, for instance, the denial of education to the poor,—and when we find them met by bitterly triumphant reproaches for inconsistency, we cannot but perceive that the desire of victory is predominating over the love of truth; and that the object really nearest the heart of the self-deceived controversialist, is not so much to diminish the empire of error, as to compel the adverse party, either, for consistency's sake, to adhere to their errors against their conviction, or else, to humble themselves before an exulting antagonist, and confess themselves vanquished. There is perhaps no one cause that contributes more to *harden* men in error and in misconduct of any kind than the dread, that a confession of having been wrong, will be met by humiliating exultation.

III. Lastly, we must be prepared to meet with in those opposed to us that fondness for disputation, and that controversial ardour, which are so common among men of all opinions: and much judgment and vigilance will be requisite both in preventing or mitigating its excesses, and in guarding against the evil effects of it: in



guarding, I mean, against the advantage which may be taken of incautious negligence, by a keen, practised, and unfair disputant, who is more eager for victory than for truth. We must in short not only strive to repress, both in ourselves and others, a disputatious spirit, but also (since, after all, we cannot hope that it will ever altogether cease to exist) we must be careful not to expose ourselves rashly to its assaults. If one who is ill-informed and unskilful, presume to step forth as a champion of his faith, against able and learned adversaries, on points where that ability and learning are likely to avail;—or if he who is well versed in one department of knowledge, will venture to engage in discussions of other matters, with which he is unacquainted, —if he will quit his own proper post, as it were, to repel attacks on another quarter,—it is not the goodness of his cause that will secure him from an overthrow, which may do discredit to that cause itself. But besides this, the ablest advocate of truth must remember, that if he is himself candid, singlehearted, and anxious only for fair investigation, he must not calculate on always finding his opponents the same; nor

must, in honest and unsuspecting frankness, lay himself open to the arts of sophistry and misrepresentation. He should in fact endeavour to be an adept in all the wiles and fallacies of controversy; not in order to practise, but to guard against, and, where needful, to detect and expose them.<sup>c</sup>

One of the commonest arts of those engaged in the defence of error, is to represent their opponents as maintaining the opposite error. And this is the easier, because in fact it will often happen, that it shall be no misrepresentation; nothing being more common than for an eager disputant to overstate his own doctrine in his zeal against that which he is combating; and thus unconsciously to be hurried by his own impetuosity into the contrary extreme<sup>d</sup>. This danger is of course to be carefully shunned; but even the appearance of it is also to be guarded against: not only lest our opponents should avail themselves of that appearance, to obtain

<sup>c</sup> Elements of Logic. "Fallacies."

<sup>d</sup> The Arian heresy appears to have in this manner originated in a rash and intemperate opposition to the Sabellian.

an unfair advantage over us, but also lest others should be led by our incautious language, into errors from which we are ourselves exempt.

The charges brought by many Socinians against their opponents, of being Tritheists, and Antinomians,—and by Romanists, against theirs, of denying all divine authority to the Church, are among the numberless instances of the readiness of controversialists to resort to this mode of attack. And however groundless in any instance such a charge may be, much blame will still attach to those who heedlessly lay themselves open to it, and are not constantly watchful “to abstain from all appearance of evil.” We cannot indeed exercise too sedulous a vigilance on this point, on account of the constant liability of all men, when warmly engaged in controversy, to lose sight for the moment of every thing except the matter in debate,—to think of nothing but of proving their present point,—and to resort to every means of accomplishing the purpose they have in hand; regardless of the future mischiefs that may arise, in a different quarter, from the errors to which they may have unconsciously been giving countenance.

They seem to be violating the command given to the Israelites, in their sieges, not to cut down trees which afford food for man, to construct their warlike engines ; but to keep sacred from the ravages of war, what would be useful in the future days of peace<sup>e</sup>.

The imprudent controversialist will often suggest fresh doubts, on points not necessarily connected with that in dispute, which will perplex, and perhaps ultimately drive into heresies of some other kind, men whose notions on those points had been originally, though not perhaps very distinct, yet not materially erroneous ; they will be startled perhaps at having a new view of some doctrine presented to them, by his incautious expressions ;—something which is stated or implied, incidentally in the course of his argument, which is to them paradoxical and offensive, and against which they raise objections. Thus new adversaries assail him from different quarters ;—advantage is taken of his inadvertencies, not only by his original opponents, but by all who, from weakness, are disposed to

\* <sup>e</sup> Deut. xx. 19.

misunderstand, or, from unfair prejudice, to misrepresent him;—and thus heresies are indefinitely multiplied, like the prolific heads of the fabulous hydra, by the unskilful attempt to destroy the first.

Not only however must we provide against the arts of controversy, and the mischiefs which may arise in the course of it, but the disputatious spirit itself must also be, as far as possible, checked and counteracted; which may in no small degree be accomplished by judicious care.

1. The first point is to set a good example; that is, to make it plain that we have not ourselves any delight in controversy; but regard it as always an evil in itself, though sometimes a necessary evil.

On this principle such errors as are either of small importance, or not likely to spread, either from their palpable absurdity, or from their having nothing inviting about them that will engage the passions of men in their support, or from the insignificance of their promulgators, it is better to leave unnoticed, than to raise a controversy about them. Many obscure heresies are mentioned by ecclesiastical historians,

(besides probably many others that escaped their attention) which died away of themselves, from being passed by with silent contempt; and many others also might perhaps as readily have become extinct, had they not been fanned into a flame by ill-judged opposition. Public attention is drawn to that which is made matter of public debate. Mankind are so formed as to take an interest in every kind of *contest*, however indifferent they may originally have been, as to the subject of it; though the subject will subsequently derive importance in their eyes from the contest itself. They are naturally led too, to conclude that there must be considerable weight in that which is very strenuously opposed;—that it must be a formidable adversary, against whom formidable preparations are made. And those who are fond of controversy, seize the opportunity of displaying their skill, and enter the lists on one side or the other: too often led by the desire of giving better proof of their abilities, to embrace the more paradoxical<sup>f</sup>. And when heresies, which, if disregarded, might have

<sup>f</sup> See Preface to *Essays*, Second Series.

sunk into speedy oblivion, have been thus magnified into serious evils, the opposers of them appeal to the magnitude of those evils, to prove that their opposition was called for : like unskilful physicians, who, when by violent remedies, they have aggravated a trifling disease into a dangerous one, urge the violence of the symptoms which they have themselves produced, in justification of their practice.

I am well aware indeed that those who delight in a contest will be ever ready to reproach such as are averse to taking up arms, with being in the interest of the enemy,—to regard as tainted with error every one who, on any occasion, thinks it not advisable to combat it : but he who sincerely “labours for peace,” must prepare himself to endure the censure of those who are ever eager to “make them ready to battle.”

It is not meant to be insinuated, that we are to regard with uniform unconcern the encroachments of false doctrines : in fact, the very caution against noticing *insignificant* heresies and those *unlikely to spread*, implies, (according to the well known maxim, that an exception proves a rule) that against such as *are* important, and threaten

to prevail, those should step forth, as champions of the true faith, who are qualified for the task. It is impossible indeed to mark out by any precise rules, what errors, in each conjuncture of circumstances, ought to be combated, and what, disregarded. That must be left to the discretion of each individual. Only let it be remembered, that the exercise of that discretion *is* called for, not only to decide whether any doctrine is false, and intrinsically dangerous, but also whether more evil is likely to arise, in each instance, from attacking or from neglecting it.

2. It may be said indeed, and with truth, that not only is controversy on many occasions unavoidable, but also, that whoever is engaged in inculcating truth, is virtually, at the same time, opposing error;—that to abstain ordinarily from all mention of any point, except those which are never controverted, would be to abandon all the essential doctrines of our religion—and that consequently we cannot abstain from combating heresy, unless we abstain from preaching the Gospel. All this is undeniably just, as far as regards the *matter* of our discussions; but the *manner* of them is a point of great importance



also; and it is to that, that I am at present inviting your attention. For, by *controversy*, or *disputation*, is commonly understood, not every course of argument whose conclusion has ever been denied, but that which has the *manner* and *tone* of opposition;—which is brought forward with the air of an advocate, rather than of a teacher,—and seems designed rather to silence an adversary than to convince and enlighten an unbiassed hearer<sup>g</sup>. Now it is too commonly the case with those who have been much accustomed to polemical writing, that every thing they say savours of this spirit of opposition; they seem always to be arguing *against* some adversary; and even their instructions are delivered rather in a controversial than a didactic form. This fault it is the more important to guard against, because nothing is so likely to generate opposition as the appearance of thus expecting and challenging it.

But besides this, it is desirable, even when opposition *has* been raised, still, as far as is practicable and safe, to adhere to the didactic style

<sup>g</sup> Elements of Rhetoric, Part I. ch. iii. § 1.

of reasoning, rather than the polemical; according to the precept of Paul, which directs the minister of the Lord “not to strive, but in meekness to *instruct* those that oppose themselves.” The method of instruction (by conveying an implied and incidental rather than a direct opposition to the contrary doctrines, while at the same time it suppresses no part of the truth,) is calculated not only to avoid the unnecessary aggravation of hostile feelings, but also to gain a more favourable hearing for the truth: whereas it gives something of a paradoxical air to any doctrine, to put forward very prominently the circumstance of its being a *disputable* point. In fact, the very argument itself which is urged, that in teaching the truth, we are of necessity, virtually, combating falsehood, will alone prove the sufficiency of the method now recommended. If we are but careful to keep back nothing of “the whole counsel of God,” we need not fear that error should flourish uncorrected.

To those who are sincerely desirous of complying with the Apostle Paul’s precept, and will habitually direct their attention to it, there will

be no great difficulty in adhering, as far as the case will allow, to this instructive style, which appears rather “ready to teach” than to contend.

A few cautions however I will briefly advert to in conclusion, not as pretending to any novelty, but as being highly important, and very frequently overlooked.

3. Let it be remembered then, that, instead of turning aside to reply to every cavil, or to notice, in the first instance, even every fair objection, that may be brought forward, it is wiser to begin at least, in each instance, by distinctly explaining our own tenets, and giving such reasons for them as will refute the opposite conclusions in the very process of establishing our own. And when we *do* find it necessary at all to notice the contrary doctrines, then, to make it our first business to examine the *whole* system adopted by our opponents, and the consequences it leads to; and to shew how strong are the objections which lie against it; instead of combating it in detail, and merely seeking flaws in this or that particular argument: to act, in short, (for the most part) principally on the offensive; and since great difficulties (as has been already

observed) may lie against each of the opposite conclusions, not to undertake to remove every one that may be urged against our own, but to consider which side labours under the greatest.

Such a procedure is so far from being (as some might, at first sight, suppose) at variance with the plan above recommended, of avoiding controversy as much as possible, that it is in fact a natural result of it. It is surely no inconsistency, that they who are averse to war, should, when it is absolutely unavoidable, prefer acting on the offensive, and carrying on their attacks with vigour, that they may the sooner accomplish their object. But moreover, the method I have been recommending is in fact the least polemical in form, that could be adopted. To be exclusively occupied in repelling and adducing objections, tends to prolong indefinitely a contest, in which neither of the disputants will be ready to acknowledge his inferiority; and has besides an immediate reference only to the *opponent* and the *controversy, as such*, rather than to the establishment of the truth; since our refutation of an antagonist's reasoning does not, of

itself, prove that his conclusions are not true<sup>h</sup>. Whereas if we direct our main attack against those conclusions themselves, at the same time shewing strong reasons in support of our own, the pride of the disputant will not be so much mortified, and he will be more likely to acquiesce in the truth, when he is thus “in meekness instructed.”

4. It should also be remembered, that as, in the case of legal punishments, some are designed to reclaim the offender, and some, merely to deter others by his example; so, in our opposition to heresies and schisms, the object is sometimes to convert and recall the erroneous, and sometimes to warn others against being seduced by them; and that a somewhat different mode of procedure should be adopted, according to the object proposed. To point out the absurdities and the mischiefs, to which any error naturally leads, is the more likely way to deter men from falling into it: but to trace up the mistake to its origin,—to explain the difficulties and clear up the misconceptions, which first

<sup>h</sup> Elements of Rhetoric, Part I. ch. iii. § 7.

gave rise to it, will generally be the more efficacious method of reclaiming those already infected. Which procedure is in each case to be adopted, must be decided according to the circumstances of that case : but that this decision may be made, not at random, but by deliberate judgment, it is useful to keep in mind the distinction which has been mentioned.

After all however, we must still expect often to meet with such obstinate heresies and schisms, as no combination of zeal with wisdom and gentleness can subdue. Often shall we have the severer mortification of seeing them fostered and aggravated by the injudicious violence of those who are on our side. And sometimes, doubts may suggest themselves to an individual, whether the good effects of his own prudence and moderation, may not be entirely frustrated by the misconduct of others. But such regrets and such doubts can bring but a transient pang to the breast of him whose hopes are firmly anchored on the rock of divine providence. While he is doing that, which, if all men did it, would cause "truth to flourish out of the earth, and righteousness to

look down from heaven," he will feel assured, that, for himself at least, his "labour is not in vain." He will rest satisfied that, whether his own efforts are successful or not, God's purposes will be fulfilled, when his unerring wisdom shall see fit : and while thus fighting under the banner of Christ, yet with humble resignation trusting the event to providence, he will be enabled to say with pious confidence, not only "thy kingdom come," but also, "thy will be done."

## LECTURE VI.

FOOLISH AND UNLEARNED QUESTIONS AVOID.

---

2 TIM. ii. 23.

*Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing  
that they do gender strife.*

IN the text which was selected for the last lecture, Paul seems to have had in view the *manner* of a Christian Minister's discourses; and in the one now before us, (which immediately precedes it) the *matter* of them. On each of these points there are cautions required, in order to afford useful instruction, and to avoid strife. And as in teaching and maintaining the great doctrines of our faith, care must be taken to avoid indiscreet violence, so also with respect



to the points themselves in discussion, there is no less exercise of discretion, in selecting such as are proper to be treated of, and avoiding those which lead to unnecessary controversy.

Now since the object proposed in these discourses was to suggest such rules as might be useful in guarding against the evils of party-spirit, and in preserving the peace of our Church, as far as that is possible without sacrificing its doctrines; — and since in every question that may arise that is likely to lead to controversy, or to generate party, there are three points to which our attention should be directed,—first our *own temper*, or that of our coadjutors,—secondly those really or seemingly at *variance* with us, whether culpable or not,—and lastly, the *matters* themselves which are the subjects of discussion, it seemed natural to distribute under these heads, the cautions to be suggested. And though the classes thus constituted are not in themselves so distinct as to preclude the possibility of their occasionally encroaching on one another, so that some of the observations referred to one head, must frequently, in some measure, anticipate what

is to be said on another, it is nevertheless a convenient aid to the memory to treat of them separately ; in order that our judgment, in each individual case that occurs, (which after all must depend on a multitude of nice considerations) may be aided by some sort of method, that shall enable us the more readily to take a comprehensive view of them all ; and may thus at least be not more perplexed than is necessary.

Of these heads the two former have been treated of in the three foregoing discourses ; in which such remarks were offered as seemed most important, on the regulation of our own temper, and on our judgment and treatment of those who differ from us. It remains to say something of the subject-matter of the discussions ; taking into consideration at the same time (as is obviously necessary) the language, which is the instrument and vehicle of those discussions ; and to suggest such rules of procedure as may conduce to the objects proposed.

It will be the business of the concluding discourses to apply what shall have been said, to the present state of the Church, both with respect to the sects which have separated from it,

and to the parties which exist, or which may be likely to spring up, within it.

I. First then with regard to the doctrines themselves on which we are occupied, all inquiries should be avoided which relate to matters, first, too *deep* and mysterious; or, secondly, too *minute* and trifling; or, thirdly, too *speculative*, and remote from Christian practice. Such were probably what the Apostle had in view when he cautioned Timothy to abstain from “foolish and unlearned questions,” ἀπαιδευτους ζητήσεις, the pursuit of which indicates a want of proper training and mental discipline with a view to the full understanding of the true character of the Gospel, and of the subjects proper to be discussed by the Christian, as such<sup>a</sup>. For since it is evident that the epithets “foolish and unlearned,” when applied to inquiries, must have reference to the inquirer himself, speculations even concerning the most interesting and sublime subjects may be foolish and unlearned to *us*, if they surpass the limits of our faculties, and

<sup>a</sup> Πεπαιδευμένου γάρ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοσούτον τὰκριβὲς ἐπιζητεῖν καθ’ ἕκαστον γένος, ἐφ’ ὅσον ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις ἐπιδέχεται.  
Arist. Eth. Nicom. b. i. c. 3.

are such as we cannot, without presumption, engage in.

1. That there *are* subjects connected with religion, which it is unprofitable or worse than unprofitable to discuss, no one would venture to deny. And it is no less undeniable, that, among these, are to be reckoned such as are neither laid open to us by Revelation, nor are comprehensible by our reason. But men are, in general, far less ready practically to conform to this maxim, than to admit its truths. And more especially is presumptuous inquiry the besetting sin of those who are free from any propensity to gross vice, and are not sufficiently occupied or interested in the business of the world, to be in much danger of temptations from that quarter; but being habitually engaged in abstract studies, and chiefly influenced by the desire of knowledge, are especially liable to the faults arising from the excess and perversion of that desire. The agitation of questions respecting the hidden counsels and nature of the Most High, has a peculiar tendency (as Paul warns us) to “gender strife;” since men are less likely to agree in the bold theories they form respecting points on which they can

have no correct knowledge, and which are in fact unintelligible to them, than in their opinions on matters which are within the scope of fair reasoning, or which may be understood by the aid of revelation. And since every disagreement in opinion leads to controversy, and is likely to array the disputants in hostile parties against each other, it is particularly important, with a view to the object originally proposed, that we should abstain from, and earnestly deprecate, inquiries on those subjects on which (besides that it shews an unbecoming presumption to enter upon them) disagreements are most likely to arise, and no satisfactory decision can ever be expected.

The heresies which arose in the earlier ages of the Church, respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, seem to have chiefly arisen from the prevailing taste for arrogant metaphysical disquisitions on that inscrutable mystery<sup>b</sup>. And in the present day the rash attempts that have been made by some to explain, on the abstract principles of justice, the counsels of the Most High in the no less incomprehensible mystery of

<sup>b</sup> See Hampden's Bampton Lectures.

the atonement<sup>c</sup>, have probably had no small share in giving growth to the prevailing heresies on that point. And when, as too often happens, the opposers of any wild and presumptuous theory, instead of condemning, as they ought, the very inquiry itself, and deprecating "foolish and unlearned questions," fall, themselves, into a like error, by pretending to substitute their own explanations of the point, for that which they object to, they aggravate and perpetuate the evils of daring speculation, and mischievous, as well as fruitless, contention. Where all are in fact in the wrong, the parties are not likely to come to an agreement: like men who should rashly venture to explore a strange land in utter darkness, they will be scattered into a thousand devious paths.

The evil too is perpetually increasing, as long as this proud spirit, which will not admit any

<sup>c</sup> Hervey is one of the most remarkable of the writers of this stamp; not on account of any superior ability displayed in his works, or from their being more strongly marked with the character in question, than those of many others; but from the extensive circulation which the piety of his sentiments, and the gaudiness of his style, have procured for them.

thing but what can be explained, — this presumptuous craving after forbidden knowledge, (the very sin by which our first parents fell) continues to be cherished. For the very offer of an explanation of any of the mysterious articles of our faith, encourages those who are dissatisfied with that explanation, to withhold their belief from the doctrines till more clearly unfolded. And if every fresh scruple thus raised, be met by a fresh attempt at explanation, there is no setting bounds to the multiplication of errors and of contentions<sup>d</sup>.

Since however every one, though he might condemn in others, as impious, the disposition to pry into inscrutable mysteries, would be unwilling to reckon among these the subject of his *own* discussions, the difficulty is to determine where the line should be drawn. And as it would be manifestly impossible within the compass, even of several discourses, to enumerate the various points, on which presumptuous inquiries have been instituted, and to assign the limits of allowable discussion in each, it will be best to

<sup>d</sup> See Appendix to Elements of Logic. Article “Person.”

mention briefly the principal *causes* which lead men to mistake the true boundaries of the human faculties.

The pride which disdains to acquiesce in the belief of what is inexplicable, and the thirst for knowledge, so natural to man, but so liable to be carried to excess, have been already adverted to, as the original causes and first movers of presumptuous inquiry: but what I have now in view, is, the misconceptions to which these feelings contribute to give rise, and through the medium of which they operate: which are principally these two; first, that men are apt (however distrustful they may be of the powers of *unaided reason*) to expect a full, distinct, and *scientific* knowledge of whatever is revealed in God's word; and secondly, that whatever is *familiar* to them, and is a common subject of their thoughts and discourse, they usually consider as comprehensible by their faculties, and clearly intelligible.

The former of these errors should be guarded against, by steadily keeping in view the *purposes* for which a Revelation was given; *viz.* not for the increase of our speculative knowledge, but



for our instruction in what is needful to be known, in order to our serving God, and conforming our lives to his commands<sup>e</sup>. Whatever does not conduce to this end, however satisfactory the knowledge of it might be to our minds, is withheld from us; in great measure perhaps for the express purpose of making a trial of our faith. We must remember therefore that, though enabled by revelation to know what reason could not discover,—and though we ought to have the most undoubting confidence in the truth of God's word,—in the *certainty* of what is thus made known to us, yet we now “know but in part;” we see indeed many of the wonders of divine providence; but we “see in a glass darkly.” Nor is God revealed to us as He is in Himself, but as He is *relatively* to ourselves. And even the relations in which he stands to us are but imperfectly developed, though as far perhaps as our present faculties can comprehend them. We stand, in short, (as many passages of Scripture seem to indicate) in somewhat the same relation to our heavenly Father, as that of little children

<sup>e</sup> Essay IV. First Series.

towards their parent ; who communicates to them indeed enough to entitle him to their love, confidence, and cheerful obedience ; but whose character and designs are very imperfectly and indistinctly understood by them<sup>f</sup>.

Hence it is that Scripture frequently gives us, in different places, such accounts of the divine attributes and dispensations, as would, if understood literally, be utterly inconsistent and contradictory ; for the express purpose, as it should seem, of teaching us to limit and modify one statement by the aid of the other,—to correct the misapprehensions which might arise from either, if considered separately, —and to be aware how partial and imperfect an insight we are intended to have into the divine mysteries<sup>g</sup>.

There cannot be a more striking instance of this, than the Scripture accounts of the doctrines of predestination and free-will. It is but too well known what bitter and interminable controversy respecting these doctrines, has been introduced into the Church by those who have

<sup>f</sup> Essay V. First Series.

<sup>g</sup> See Archbishop King's Discourse on Predestination, appended to this volume.

paid an exclusive attention to each of them respectively; and who have thought themselves warranted to seek for a full and clear understanding of the subject, on the ground that it is to be found in a divine revelation. Those will indeed have but faint and *imperfect* notions of it, who adhere to the rule of giving a fair portion of attention to all parts of Scripture, and never interpreting any passage so as to be irreconcilable with another; but they, and they alone understand the word of God as it was designed to be understood. If on any such mysterious subject as this, our notions are perfectly distinct and full, there is strong ground of suspicion at least, (for that very reason,) that they are incorrect.

With regard to the other mistake just noticed, —that of confounding *familiar acquaintance* with accurate knowledge, and imagining ourselves capable of clearly understanding the nature of whatever we have been much accustomed to think and speak of, (a mistake which is very common in other subjects, as well as theology) it should be guarded against by deep and habitual reflection on the innumerable mysteries which

daily surround us,—and on the scanty and indistinct conception we have, of many phenomena whose existence we cannot doubt, and which we have continually before our eyes. The union, for instance, of corporeal and intellectual attributes in every one of us, and the mutual action of the mind and body on each other, are so familiar to us from constant use, as to have long since ceased to strike us with any degree of wonder; and hence we are apt to forget how utterly inexplicable they are. Many are to be met with who will lay down precise dogmas as to the nature of the soul, anathematizing all who disagree with them; while natural philosophers have not yet decided whether Heat, Light, and Electricity are Substances or Attributes.

It is the same in numberless other instances; and among these, in respect of many of the doctrines both of natural and revealed religion, which, men, who have been perhaps acquainted with them from their earliest infancy, and accustomed to think and converse much upon them, are thus insensibly led to regard as far more comprehensible by the human mind than in fact

they are. Hence they not only often venture to attempt explanations of matters beyond the reach of the human faculties, but even regard such explanations as a necessary part of Christian instruction, and are ready to censure as unbelievers, such as profess to receive the doctrines in question, with implicit faith and reverence, but object to the explanation proposed,—abstain from any such attempt,—and acquiesce in them with awe, as unfathomable mysteries.

It is indeed a remarkable fact, that a man is usually less offended with those who profess to understand what he does not, than with those who acknowledge their inability to comprehend, what he holds to be clearly intelligible; since these last will appear to entertain a suspicion at least, (of what is probably the truth) that he has been deluding himself with empty fallacies, and grasping a phantom.

Those however who are more charitably disposed, are content to reckon one who thus confesses his ignorance, among the babes in Christ, who, though not heretical, are yet very backward and deficient in religious knowledge: whereas he is perhaps in fact further advanced than

themselves. And if they will continue to study and meditate with patient and humble diligence, they will perceive more and more the vastness of the obscurity that is around them; and will attain at length to that most valuable and fundamental branch of wisdom, the knowledge of their own ignorance. They will find, like Simonides, that the longer they reflect on the nature of the Deity, the more difficult and mysterious it will appear.

Even the words which are most familiarly employed in our reasoning, and which seem to occasion no perplexity or embarrassment in it, will, many of them, be found, on attentive examination, to convey ideas, of which we have but a very indistinct comprehension, and which lead, by a very few steps, into an unfathomable abyss of darkness. Such are "Time," "Space," "Eternity," "Infinity," "Cause,"—and in short most of the terms employed in the discussion of questions even of natural religion. Let any, for instance, consider, that since our only idea of *time*, is derived from the *succession* of impressions on our minds, it follows, that to a Being who is eternal and omniscient, there can be no such

thing as past and future, “but” (as the poet<sup>h</sup> well expresses it) “an eternal Now does ever last;” which notion seems alluded to in our Lord’s words, “Before Abraham was, I *am*.” And he will perceive at once how easily we may be lost in inexplicable mystery, by attentively reflecting on the meaning of the most common and familiar terms; and how much more, though without perceiving it, we are likely to be bewildered, by rashly employing them in their reasoning, without such reflection.

Indeed there are probably few men of sound judgment, who have carefully attended to the improvement of their faculties, that do not remember the time when many things appeared to them perfectly simple and intelligible, which they now regard as difficult and obscure. And in no point perhaps is the advantage of a judicious and truly philosophical cultivation of mind more apparent, than in its guarding us against the common error of regarding the things spoken of as easily comprehensible, in proportion as the names of them are common and familiar. The Algebraist and the Logician, being accustomed

<sup>h</sup> Cowley.

to the use of arbitrary symbols, are well aware of the important fact, that we may reason justly, even where the terms employed are utterly unmeaning to us. And if they are careful to make due application of this principle, they will not forget, that, though it may often be a great convenience to have a *name*, for something of which we have but a very imperfect idea, we must not thence suppose that we have attained to the knowledge of it.

2. Besides the unfathomable mysteries which we have now been speaking of, it was mentioned in the opening of this discourse, that another class of subjects, from which we should abstain if we would avoid questions which gender strife, is, the minute and insignificant : such as, though they are not beyond the reach of the human faculties to decide upon, yet being either altogether unworthy of discussion, or not of sufficient consequence to justify the risk of raising dissension, should be avoided on the principle formerly laid down ; that controversy should always be regarded as an evil in itself, to be incurred only when necessary for the sake of some important good. For it should be



remembered, that not only does every question that can be raised, lead to differences of opinion, disputes, and parties, but also, that the violence of the dispute, and the zeal and bigoted spirit of the party, are by no means proportioned to the importance of the matter at issue. The smallest spark, if thrown among very combustible substances, may raise a formidable conflagration ; and when men are disposed for strife, the discussion of any question, however insignificant, may engage them in a contest, in which the zeal and animosity of the disputants will inflame each other, to a degree which appears to calm observers almost incredibly disproportionate to the magnitude of the point itself. Witness the long and acrimonious controversies which distracted the Church concerning the proper time for the observance of Easter ; and concerning the use of leavened or unleavened bread at the Lord's supper. We of the present day, viewing these disputes from a distance with the eye of sober reason, and perceiving of how little consequence it is in itself, whether one day or another be set apart by the Church for the celebration of a religious festival,

or whether the sacramental bread be leavened or not, provided these points be so fixed as to produce a decent uniformity, at least among the members of each Church, can hardly bring ourselves to believe, that the most important doctrines of the Gospel were not made the subject of more eager contentions, than such trifles as these; and that for these the peace and unity of the Church were violated, and Christian charity too often utterly destroyed. But we should not forget that human nature is still the same as it ever was; and that though the controversies of one age may often appear ridiculous in another, the disposition to contend about trifles may remain unchanged.

3. Not only however should we avoid the risk of causing needless strife by the discussion of such questions as are *in themselves* trifling, but those also are to be regarded as, to *us*, insignificant, which, however curious, sublime, and interesting, can lead to no practical result, and have no tendency to make us better Christians, but are merely matters of speculative curiosity<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> The speculations of many divines respecting the doctrine of the Millennium may perhaps be referred to this class.

Paul is frequent and earnest in his exhortations to his converts to confine themselves to such studies as tend to the edification of the Church,—the increase of the fruits of the Spirit,—the conversion of infidels,—and the propagation of the essential doctrines of the Gospel. And that these doctrines are of a *practical* tendency,—that the Christian revelation is not calculated to gratify our thirst after knowledge for its own sake, but to instruct us in what is useful to be known with a view to our salvation, is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the true religion. All the systems framed by human superstition, enthusiasm, and imposture, whether Pagan, Romish, or Mahometan, abound, as might be expected, in mythological fables and marvellous legends, well fitted to interest and gratify the curiosity of the credulous, but not even pretending to be of any practical importance. Our religion, as might no less be expected of one which comes from God, reveals to us the Father, that we may worship, and thank Him, and trust in his kind providence ;—the Son, that we may humbly rely on his atonement, and seek his mediation, and prepare to be judged by Him

at the last day;—and the Holy Spirit, that we may implore His inward aid, and be led by his suggestions.

I would not be understood indeed to preclude all thought or mention of any subject connected with religion, whose practical utility we are unable to point out: only let all *controversy* at least, and every thing that is likely, under existing circumstances, to lead to controversy, on such points, be carefully avoided. When once a flame is kindled, we cannot tell how far it may spread. And since, though we may be *allowed*, we cannot be *bound* in duty to discuss speculative points of theology, the blame of occasioning needless dissension must lie with those, who so discuss them as to incur a risk that hostile parties may arise out of their speculations.

That questions of no practical importance may “gender strife,” and divide Christians into sects filled with the most bitter animosity, paradoxical as it may be, is but too clearly evinced by experience: and the faultiness of those who by their pride and party-spirit are the immediate causes or promoters of such schism and strife, does not exculpate the others, whose imprudent

speculations first called into action their evil passions.

II. The cautions to be observed with respect to the language of religious discussions have been in great measure anticipated by what has been already said, both in this, and the foregoing discourses. Words being not merely the vehicle for conveying our thoughts to others, but also the *instrument* of thought itself, on abstract subjects, all rules for forming correct notions ourselves,—for rightly interpreting and judging of the faith of another,—and for conducting controversy, and imparting instruction, discreetly, must have an immediate reference to the proper use of language. It is however so common a fault to overlook the importance of words in influencing our thoughts, that it may be advisable to lay down distinctly and separately some maxims relative to this point, and to keep them steadily in view.

The rules most important to be observed with respect to the use of language, are, first, to be aware of the *ambiguity* of words, and watchful against being misled by it; since the *same* word not only may, but often must, be used to

express *different* meanings : secondly, (since on the other hand the *same* meaning may be expressed by *different* words) to guard against attaching too great importance to the use of any particular term : and lastly, to avoid, as much as possible, introducing or keeping up the use of any peculiar *set* of words and phrases, as the badge of a party.

1. The neglect of the first of these cautions has probably contributed more than any other cause to the excitement of groundless and unsatisfactory disputes, leading to all the evils of strife and division. If one of the principal terms be understood in different senses by the respective parties, who in reality perhaps differ very little (originally at least) in their sentiments, there is but small chance of their bringing the discussion to a close. For men are in general prone to mistake words for things, and to regard those as real, which are in fact only verbal controversies ; and yet are usually so indignant at being cautioned against this mistake,—they regard it as so high an affront to be suspected of being unconsciously engaged in a logomachy,<sup>k</sup>—

<sup>k</sup> Elements of Logic, B. iv. ch. 4.

that he who proposes to terminate a contest by proving that it turns on the ambiguity of words, must prepare himself to incur, from the eager controversialists of both parties, even more ill-will than they feel towards their opponents.

Experience affords but too many instances to illustrate what has been said.

The questions respecting fatalism and free-will (mysterious as the subject undoubtedly is in itself) have been greatly perplexed, and the true character of the difficulty mistaken, through the ambiguity of such words as "possible," "may," "can," and others of that class, which relate sometimes to *power*, and sometimes to *contingency*. For instance, in one sense it is true, and in the other, false, that a man of strict integrity *may* defraud his neighbour; *i. e.* he has it in his *power*, if he will; (otherwise there would be no merit in his honesty) but we may be *certain* that he will not. On the other hand, when we say that a sick man *may* recover of his disease, we mean not that it depends on his will to do so, but merely that we are not certain of the event. And thus the attribute of prescience, since it is manifestly incompatible with *doubt and*

*uncertainty* in the Being who foresees, has been represented as incompatible with free-agency in him whose conduct is foreseen.

The word "Person" again, when its ambiguity has not been clearly explained, seems to have had a share in occasioning many apparent, and, ultimately, many real heresies. In its ordinary colloquial sense it always implies a *distinct substance*: in its theological sense, being a literal, or rather perhaps an etymological, translation of the Latin word *Persona*, which has not that meaning, and answering to the Greek *Hypostasis*, it is applied by the Church to express the distinction which she affirms to exist between those whose identity of substance she expressly maintains<sup>1</sup>. Many a doubt might be satisfied, and many a cavil silenced, by the simple expedient of clearly stating this ambiguity.

In the controversies also concerning regeneration, though much real difference of sentiment has prevailed, much more also has probably appeared to exist, and much perplexity has been introduced into the discussion, from the different

<sup>1</sup> In the Nicene Creed, where the Son is declared to be "of one substance with the Father."



senses in which the word has been used ; sometimes to signify the act of *first entering* upon a Christian life, sometimes that life itself,—and that regenerate *state*, in its full maturity and vigour of action.

Many persons are the more liable to fall into the error now under consideration, from their too hastily making their appeal to the language of Scripture, without sufficiently considering in what different senses the same word is often used in different places by the sacred writers ; who seem indeed not to have designed to draw up and adhere to a strict technical vocabulary<sup>m</sup>, but to have aimed only at making their meaning clear in each separate passage that they wrote. The different uses of the word “ Faith ” by the Apostles Paul and James, is a familiar instance of this ; but is only one out of many that might be adduced. Indeed so far are the inspired writers from endeavouring (all of them in combination) after a uniform mode of stating any doctrine, that even each one of them seems to have sought for a variety of terms and phrases for expressing his ideas more forcibly and clearly.

<sup>m</sup> See Essay III. § 2. Second Series.

2. This ought surely to be an example to us to adhere to the other maxims above laid down. We should learn from it not to exact too rigidly an adherence to any particular form of expression,—attaching undue importance to a name, where the substance of any doctrine shall appear, on a candid examination, to be correctly held. The observance of this rule would probably have allayed the controversy which took place on the article in the Nicene Creed, relating to the procession of the Holy Ghost, in which there seems to have been no essential difference between the parties. And we should also learn to observe that other caution above-mentioned, of avoiding the peculiar and characteristic *language* of a party; *viz.* the constant and unvaried use of certain fixed technical words and phrases, in the statement of each doctrine: to which kind of fixed phraseology the term “cant” is most commonly applied.

Many evils arise from this practice. In the first place the constant recurrence of the same terms, usually causes the hearer to become in time inattentive to the things signified. The sounds are so familiar to him, that at length

they affect him little more than as mere sounds, which do not rouse the mind to earnest reflection. Whereas every variation in language tends to dispel this inertness of the understanding, and to awaken attention. In the next place, since our language when treating of heavenly things must be borrowed by analogy from things more level to our capacity, and since these analogies cannot but be very imperfect, the constant employment of the *same*<sup>n</sup> analogical expressions in each case respectively, will be apt to suggest to the hearer and fix in his mind some incorrect theory on the subject, by leading him to suppose the analogy more complete than in fact it is. The obvious preventive of this evil is to *vary* as much as possible the analogies made use of, that each may serve to correct the erroneous notions that might be suggested by another. Of this procedure we have most striking examples in the numerous and ever-varied parables by which our Lord illustrated each subject He was treating of; and in

<sup>n</sup> See some excellent observations on this subject in Professor D. Stewart's *Philosophy of the human Mind*. See also the Introduction to Dr. King's *Discourse*.

the multiplicity of different metaphors employed by the Apostles in explaining each article of the Faith. Lastly, it is obvious that causeless divisions and all the evils of party-spirit must be greatly promoted by adopting and uniformly adhering to a fixed set of expressions calculated to become the badges of a party. For by this means, over and above all the real differences of opinion which exist, a fresh cause of opposition and separation is introduced among those who would perhaps be found, if their respective statements were candidly explained, to have in their tenets *no* real ground of disunion.

I would not be understood as questioning the necessity of retaining such creeds and articles of faith as are requisite for limiting the vagueness of men's interpretation of Scripture, and maintaining in the members of the Church, an agreement as to essential points;—but, as suggesting a caution against falling into a pernicious extreme, — that of too constant an adherence, without necessity, to a single form of expression on each point, and too hasty a censure of all who vary from it°. In fact, the very expediency

° See Essay on the “Omission of Creeds, &c. in Scripture.”

of these fixed formularies of our Church establishes the point for which I am contending: for since that expediency consists in their helping to keep together, as a distinct Body, the members of that Church, which in this case is a desirable effect, it follows, that where no such object is, or ought to be, proposed, the means which lead to it should be avoided.

There is nothing that tends more strongly than this practice, to generate and to prolong causeless divisions among Christians. For, every *peculiarity* (as was formerly observed) which characterizes any class of men, however insignificant it may be in itself, is generally cherished by them with undue regard; and serves to heighten their zeal, and strengthen their union as a party. Nor will the consequences of such divisions be by any means as trifling as their causes; for when parties are once firmly established, and arrayed against each other, their opposition will usually increase; and the differences between them, which were originally little more than imaginary, may in time become serious and important.

I shall have occasion however again to advert

to this point in the subsequent discourses, and especially in speaking of the dissension and party-spirit existing within the bosom of our Church. In the next discourse, the case of the *dissenters* from our Church will be considered, and an application made, of the foregoing principles, to the open schisms existing in the present day.

It would indeed be vain for us to hope (since even the Apostles could not effect so much) entirely to remove these evils; but we shall be following the safest guides, and doing the utmost benefit to the Church that human weakness and depravity will allow, if we carefully and habitually study and endeavour to conform to *their* principles and their practice, who are at once the most unerring instructors, and the most perfect models.

## LECTURE VII.

CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO DISSENTERS.

---

COL. iv. 5.

*Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.*

THOUGH we cannot on every occasion discern fully the reasons of God's dealings with us, we may be well assured, that the situation, whatever it may be, in which we are placed, has its appropriate duties annexed to it; and that the greatest present difficulties and afflictions, since they afford scope for the exercise of some corresponding Christian virtues, may be made conducive to our eternal benefit. Like the insect which gathers honey even from poisonous weeds, the true Christian will derive spiritual advantage

from temporal evils ; and fully trusting that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” will (without presuming to explain all the counsels of the Most High) set himself earnestly to profit by all his dispensations, and to practise those duties which the existing circumstances especially call for.

To the early Christians it must have been one of their most grievous trials to live in the midst of unbelievers ; among whom must have been included many who were not only their fellow-citizens, but also their relations and friends. And in addition to this, there were also many heresies, which had sprung up among themselves, and which must have been a heavy addition to their temptations and afflictions.

To both these circumstances the Apostles frequently advert ; and point out to their converts the duties thence arising,—the Christian virtues which were to be thereby exercised. The prevalence of infidelity furnished a secondary motive, (and no one who understands human nature will depreciate the utility of secondary motives,) to a life of such purity and rectitude, as might do credit to their profession, and recommend their



faith : and the springing up of heresies furnished a trial of their vigilance, their patience, and their steady zeal in the cause of truth. “ There must be,” says Paul, “ heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest :” and again, with reference to the idolatry of the Gentiles by whom his converts were surrounded, he cautions them to “ walk in wisdom ” towards these ; he requires that the elders of the Church be such as “ have a good report of them which are without ;” and he rebukes the sins of a large proportion of the Jews, in that, “ the name of God is blasphemed through them among the Gentiles.” So also Peter exhorts the Christian women so to conduct themselves, “ that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the Word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear :” and again ; “ having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

The conduct of Christians of the present day should be actuated, as far as the circumstances in which they are placed correspond, by similar

motives. Many of our countrymen who are living in foreign regions, especially in the East, are in the midst of Pagans; and most solemnly they should be warned of the peculiarly awful responsibility they lie under, and of the strong additional motive they have for leading a Christian life; inasmuch as if, by their sinful lives or apparent indifference about religion, they encourage a contempt for the Gospel, or a prejudice against it, they will have to answer for the evil effects produced by their example; and will have a fearful account, not only of their own souls, but also of those of the heathen whose conversion they will thus have impeded. The same considerations will apply to the case of those that have friends, who are either altogether indifferent about religion, or unbelievers: there can hardly be a more painful trial. But it is our fault if we do not make a spiritual advantage of it, by regarding it habitually as a motive for redoubling our vigilance and zeal.

And as far as regards the practical application of what has been said, we may properly reckon as of the number of “those which are without,” both Romanists, and Dissenters from the Church.

Not that we are to consider them as on a level with Pagans, and as excluded from the Gospel-covenant; but the question is not now concerning the *magnitude* or the *nature* of *their* errors, but concerning the rules of conduct to be observed by *ourselves*, with a view to the maintenance and propagation of the truth. It will hardly be denied that there is such a thing as the sin of Schism; and that it is incurred by those who, without sufficient grounds, separate themselves from our communion, whether to enrol themselves as adherents of an usurping foreign Church, or to join any sect of protestant dissenters. And the mere adherence to any such church or sect, even in persons originally brought up in it, though it may be denied to be strictly speaking, schismatical<sup>a</sup>, must be

<sup>a</sup> “Schism and Heresy, considered merely as ecclesiastical crimes, may be illustrated by the analogous case of political crimes. The schismatic renounces his allegiance to the ecclesiastical government under which he has been living; the heretic adopts practices and opinions contrary to its laws. The schismatic therefore is, as it were, in rebellion against his Church; the heretic, a violater of its laws.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“If a Church has been formed by the secession of members

admitted to be culpable; supposing the society in question to be unscriptural in principle or in usages. It is clearly therefore a Christian duty in every member of our Church who is persuaded of her scriptural character, not only to remain in that communion, but to discourage separation from it;—not only to abstain from adopting, but to give no countenance to, erroneous doctrines or practices; and, in every part of his conduct, to consult the welfare and peace of his church, and regard himself as engaged in her cause.

There are indeed some who would be ready from another Church, on disagreement of principles, each seceder is both a schismatic and a heretic, because of his former connexion; but the crime does not attach to the Church so formed; and accordingly is not entailed on succeeding members who naturally spring up in it. If the schism was founded in *error*, the guilt of error would always attach to it and its members; but not that of schism or heresy. On the same principle, the present King of Great Britain's claim to the allegiance of his subjects is not affected by the question of William the Conqueror's right to the throne formerly; nor would an American traitor stand excused, who should plead in defence of his treason, that the disunion was unjustifiable, to which the United States owe their independence."—Hinds' "Rise and Progress," Vol. II.

to censure such sentiments as these, in a layman at least, as savouring of narrow-minded bigotry, and uncharitable party-spirit; as if every one who contends that schism ought to be opposed as in itself sinful, must needs regard it as an *unpardonable* sin, which at once excludes those guilty of it from salvation: but it surely is not necessary, in order to keep clear of such intolerant harshness as this, that we should adopt such a notion of charity as removes, in fact, the principal occasion for the exercise of that virtue; for the chief province of charity and forbearance evidently consists in forgiving, and making allowance for those who are in *fault*,—in treating with candour and with personal kindness those whose principles we *disapprove*; but if there be no fault in schism, there is nothing to forgive;—if there is nothing wrong in those who disagree with us, there can be no great exercise of charity and liberality in allowing that disagreement.

This indifference clad in the garb of candour, is, as I have said, the most frequently met with, and the most expected, in those who are not engaged in the ministry. Laymen are indeed but too apt to consider themselves as little more

than by-standers in the dispute between the Church and her opponents. They perhaps give her the preference indeed, but rather as a matter of taste than of conscience; or at least, rather, as umpires between two contending parties, than as making the cause their own. And many a one may be found who would allow, and even expect, in the Clergy, some zeal in that cause, yet would seem to regard it as altogether *their* concern; not as one in which he himself has a common interest.

These sentiments often arise not so much from weakness or perversity, as from thoughtlessness, and want of due attention to the subject. For every sincere and candid Christian, if he can be brought to reflect attentively on the solemnity with which the Church was instituted, as a Body not of Ministers merely, but of Christians at large, and on the earnestness with which its divine Founder and his Apostles inculcated the duty of preserving its harmony and promoting its welfare, both in respect of the first Christian Church, that of Jerusalem, and of the others subsequently founded, will hardly fail to be convinced, that if he would claim a

share in the benefits of Christ's redemption, he cannot be indifferent to his institutions; and that therefore, as he is not only permitted, but bound, to withdraw from our Church, if he finds her doctrines or institutions essentially at variance with the word of God; so, if he finds her to be, in doctrine and practice, scriptural, he is no less bound to endeavour to shew himself a faithful, and as far as his opportunities extend, a useful member of the society he belongs to.

The rules by which we should be guided in using these endeavours, in what relates to our dealings with those at variance with the established Church, may most conveniently be classed under three heads, of Correctness of life, Zeal, and Conciliation: first, that we should be careful to preserve such an irreproachable purity and rectitude of conduct as may adorn and recommend the society to which we belong; next, that we should be active, according to our opportunities, in maintaining and propagating the truth; and lastly, that we should manifest such gentleness, such candour towards the opinions, and such tenderness towards the persons,

of those opposed to us, as may both moderate the acrimony of party, and win over those who are in error.

I. With respect to the first of these points, it might be supposed, on a superficial view, that to each individual Christian the direct and primary motives to personal holiness, are so powerful as to need no addition; so that he would either be sufficiently influenced by these, or would be callous to all others. But if we either reason from those general principles of our nature which have been already treated of, or attend to the lessons of experience, we shall not fail to arrive at the conclusion, that men are very powerfully influenced in their moral conduct by the secondary motive of anxiety for the credit of the Body they belong to; of which indeed they sometimes appear even more careful than of their own.

The Apostles seem to have been fully aware of this natural principle, and to have had a view to it in many of their exhortations; as appears from the passages which have been already cited, and others of a similar character. The dread of bringing disgrace on the whole Body, and the desire to recommend and adorn it, seem to have



been recognized by them as useful additional incentives to vigilance and active virtue. Nor were they enforcing a motive which reason will not sanction, and which is suited only to the weakness of our nature ; but one which is perfectly sound and rational. Men are not only more *likely*, but also more strongly *bound*, to conduct themselves well, when the credit of their religious profession is concerned : they are not only more easily deterred, by a sense of shame, from any such misconduct as may bring a scandal upon the whole Body, but they in reality incur greater guilt if they fall into it ; since our conduct is to be estimated not merely by its intrinsic character, but also by its tendency to lead to an acceptance or rejection of the truth by others.

Now that the world are in general very much influenced in their judgment concerning any religious persuasion by the lives of its professors, is undeniable ; and however rash and ill-founded such a judgment may often be, still we must remember that it *will* be formed. It is not universally true, but it will always be believed by many, that those whose lives are the most correct,

are the most correct in faith also ; and that unchristian conduct is a symptom of erroneous doctrine : and whatever blame may attach to those who suffer themselves to be misled by applying this criterion, the sin of him who occasions the scandal will not be thereby lessened.

I have said, that the conduct of the members of any religious persuasion does not afford a safe criterion for judging of the correctness of that persuasion : it is indeed abstractedly true, that the purest Christian faith leads to the most virtuous conduct ; but this test cannot fairly be applied in practice, without many cautions and exceptions ; since under different circumstances men's lives are influenced in very different degrees by their respective systems of faith. And to conclude from the immoral lives of some ministers or others members of our Church, that the doctrines of that Church are less scriptural than those of some sect whose partisans are more correct in manners, without distinguishing between that which is the natural and proper *tendency* of any system of faith, and that which results from the *abuse*, or from the practical disregard of it, would be a perversion of our Lord's

admonition, to “know the tree by its fruits.” Such an application indeed of that maxim, in its metaphorical sense, would be no less rash, than it would be of its literal sense, were we to draw a similar general conclusion from the instance of the barren fig-tree which Jesus cursed, and to judge of the nature of the whole species from that individual.

Of the circumstances which ought to be taken into consideration in any such case, one of the principal is, the more active zeal of the smaller and weaker party, which makes them usually both more bitter in spirit, and also more strict in many points of morality<sup>b</sup>. Each individual, in proportion as he feels himself a more important portion of the body he belongs to, is likely to

<sup>b</sup> It is worth remarking, that the most ordinary popular use of the words “moral” and “morality” is much more limited than, what may be called, the philosophical sense of them. A man would not usually be said to lead an *immoral* life, who was clear of all offences against the laws, and also chaste and temperate; though he might be proud, insolent, contentious, selfish, illiberal, &c. And yet, so irregularly and promiscuously are the two senses introduced, that every one would allow modesty, gentleness, liberality, &c. to be “moral virtues.”

take a livelier interest in its welfare ; and thence will usually be both more liable to the excesses of bigotry and animosity, and also more careful to bring no scandal on his party.

It is but just therefore that men should be warned to take this circumstance into consideration, when they institute any comparison between the moral conduct of Churchmen and of Dissenters ; and to remember that the activity in Christian duties which they now perhaps admire in some sect, would be put to a severe trial, if their's were to become the prevailing and established religion.

The friends of the Church again should be exhorted to aim at securing the advantages which lie on both sides, while they keep clear of the concomitant evils ; — to emulate the diligence, and strictness in morals, to be found in some Dissenters ; yet retaining a liberal and candid spirit.

Another circumstance, which ought not to be overlooked by those who are comparing Churchmen with sectaries, in respect of Christian practice, is, that those who are indifferent to all religion, are, for the most part, from motives of

convenience, nominally, members of the Establishment: and that persons whose lives do no credit to their profession, are much more likely to be excluded from the communion of a sect, than from that of our Church; which thus ranks among her seeming adherents some who do not even profess any regard for her doctrines or institutions.

I would not be understood as giving any opinion as to this lenity in the exercise of the Church's discipline; or rather this absence of discipline. The very circumstance that our Church's authority is supported by that of the Law, has had the effect of the almost entire abandonment of all exercise of it. But it is surely fair that the fact should be admitted, and allowance made for it in forming our judgments.

The greater our difficulties however, the greater should be our diligence; the more liable we are to suffer from unjust prejudices, the more vigilant we should be to avoid giving occasion for any well-grounded charge. And each member of any Church is *doubly* bound by his allegiance to Christ who is the Head of it, not only in direct obedience to his commands, but also

for the benefit of a society instituted in conformity with his directions, both himself to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour in all things, and likewise to promote to the utmost of his power the same conduct in the fellow-members of his Church. Especially should he avoid even the appearance of *tolerating* in any of them a laxity of morals for the sake of their adherence to the Church,—of regarding orthodoxy of profession as a kind of compensation for an unchristian life: remembering how solemnly our Lord excludes from the number of his disciples all the workers of iniquity who “call Him Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says<sup>c</sup>.”

II. With respect to that Zeal for the refutation of error and the propagation of truth, which was mentioned as requisite to be added to purity of morals, it is to be remembered that this, if combined with discretion and temper, has no tendency to diminish the esteem or good will of our opponents. It is a mistake to think that we can obtain the favour of those who differ from us, by professing latitudinarian principles. On

<sup>c</sup> See Errors of Romanism, Ch. v. § 8.

the contrary, those who have themselves any conscientious zeal, always think more favourably of such as, in that respect, resemble themselves, even though disagreeing with them in religious tenets, than of those who regard the matters in question as insignificant, when they are really among the essentials of religion. What Protestant, for instance, would not think more favourably of the spiritual condition of a sincere Romanist, than of one who should regard with indifference the points at issue between the two Churches, as trifling and unimportant?

It is therefore not less impolitic than it is unwarrantable, to adopt that spurious liberality of sentiment which makes light of heresy and schism. Neither prudence nor conscience will allow us to withhold censure (when the occasion calls on us to express our sentiments) from those who are either fundamentally erroneous in doctrine, or violators of Christian concord; though that censure must be free from unchristian asperity. Not that every member of the Church is called upon to step forward as her champion against sectaries; but every one is bound to be cautious of affording, directly or indirectly, any

encouragement to their fault ; nor must he suppose, that he is free from all participation in that fault, so long as he does not formally renounce the communion of the Church.

I allude more especially to a sort of occasional dissent, which is sometimes practised and defended by persons who profess no disapprobation of our Church, but object to some particular minister of it, as incompetent, or unsound in his preaching, in comparison with some dissenting teacher to whom they have access. The excuse is plausible ; nor would I be understood to question the sincere good intentions of many who offer it ; much less to do away the force of the admonition which is thus given to a minister, when his flock desert him ; and especially when he finds that even the judicious and sober-minded part of them, who are not unfriendly to the Church, nor foolishly eager for novelty, complain of his preaching, as unedifying or disgusting, and withdraw from their attendance on his ministry. But still, those who urge this plea should be reminded, that if any doctrines decidedly heretical are broached, or gross improprieties committed, complaint may be made



to the proper authorities. This indeed is an unpleasant office ; and is often avoided by *all*, on the plea, that it does not belong to any *one* in particular<sup>d</sup>. But each Christian is bound, in such a case, to consider how he would act, if his own temporal interests were at stake ;—whether he would not find then some means of procuring redress, if his rights were withheld from him,—and how he can answer to his conscience, for being more remiss in what concerns God's honour

<sup>d</sup> That cases of this kind do occur, in which men are kept back, by such feelings as I have alluded to, from seeking such redress as might actually be obtained, will hardly be denied. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that very just and serious ground of complaint may exist, where nothing can be so taken hold of as to be made the ground of ecclesiastical censure. Those who, in such a case, forsake their parish-church, to attend on the ministry, not of a dissenting teacher, but of some other clergyman belonging to the establishment, have been sometimes perhaps too severely censured for the practice. For though those are justly to be blamed who, “having itching ears,” are seeking to gratify their taste for eloquence, and to exercise their critical skill,—or who are actuated by a wanton love of variety,—it would surely be going too far to say that no circumstances can justify those who in singleness of heart are anxiously seeking spiritual instruction, for resorting to the expedient in question.

and service, than in what relates to the perishable goods of this world.

If again (as will most frequently be the case) it be only a *deficiency* in the edifying inculcation of Gospel truths that is complained of, for this evil, lamentable as it certainly is, our Church has provided the best remedy that the case will admit, both in the public reading of the Scriptures themselves, and also in a Liturgy so framed as not only to be agreeable to the general tenor of the Gospel, but likewise to inculcate its leading doctrines. If our Church (as was the case before the Reformation,) kept the Scriptures a sealed book to the unlearned, and assigned to the personal sincerity of the minister an influence in the efficacy of the Sacraments<sup>e</sup>;—or if, like some of the reformed Churches, she admitted neither the public reading of the Scriptures, nor the use of an established liturgy, but trusted

<sup>e</sup> The Church of Rome does indeed admit that the official acts of a *vicious* Priest may be valid; but makes the *inward intention* of the Priest requisite to the efficacy of every sacrament he administers; so that if he designedly withhold this intention, there is no true sacrament. The Council of Trent anathematizes those who deny this position.

every thing to the extemporaneous effusions of the preacher, the excuse in question would have great weight. But as it is, men should consider whether the immediate advantage gained is not more than counterbalanced by the violation of an important general rule,—by the gradual depreciation thus produced of the duty of preserving christian harmony,—by the countenance afforded to schism,—and the extenuation in the eyes of men in general, of the evils it produces. At any rate, they should at least not overlook the objections which lie on this side of the alternative.

Let it be remembered however, that whatever degree of blame may, in each case that occurs, attach to those who forsake the Church, the Minister is not the less heavily responsible, whose unsound, or negligent, or indiscreet preaching, has aided to drive into dissent those entrusted to his care.

Although however we are bound to avoid giving any encouragement, direct or indirect, to heresy or schism, and to keep clear of even the appearance of regarding them with indifference: and though such as are well qualified

should be ready, when fit occasions offer, to defend the cause of the Church,—to warn the unwary,—and to admonish the erroneous, yet the most advisable plan, generally speaking, will be, to oppose sectaries, not so much by directly preaching against them, as by diligence in affording religious instruction, as far as we have opportunity. And this not with respect to the controverted points merely, but in all the essential truths of the Gospel as maintained by our Church, especially those most dwelt upon by our opponents. Such a procedure is not only the least likely to produce irritation, but at the same time the most efficacious with a view to the object proposed. It will refute the charges so often brought against Churchmen, of remissness and of indifference about the great truths of Christianity ;—it will deprive of all excuse those who desert the Church professedly for the sake of hearing those doctrines preached ;—it will remedy that ignorance which is the soil on which errors are the most likely to spring up ;—and it will remove all appearance of that corrupt and unchristian party-spirit, which is more zealous for the Church than for the Gospel, and

which rather values our Religion for the sake of the Establishment, than the Establishment for the sake of the Religion. Most sedulously indeed must we guard in every way against affording either any just ground, or any shew of truth, for the accusation of adhering to the Church because it is established by the State, and resting her spiritual authority on the law of the land. Against the members of any legally established Church, indeed, this accusation will always be brought by her opponents, whether it be well founded or not; but they must for that reason be the more diligent by their life and doctrine to refute the charge.

If indeed the members of our Church, while they oppose Dissenters, fail to use their best exertions, in every way, for promoting the spiritual improvement of their fellow-subjects, they cannot complain, or wonder, at finding that their zeal in the cause is attributed to impure motives;—to self-interested views, or to political considerations, and to a regard for the Church chiefly as a part of the Constitution. And most especially should we be active in remedying that evil which has been but too

prevailing an occasion and excuse for schism, the want of sufficient places of worship, and of ministerial attendance, of the established Church. In places where this deficiency prevails in any great degree, to caution men against attending on dissenting teachers, might seem like condemning them to perish by famine, lest they should use unwholesome food. And those who severely censure them, yet shew themselves indifferent about supplying the defect in question, or more ready to expend money on architectural ornaments for a small number of Churches, than, (when that is the alternative) on provision for the spiritual wants of multitudes of their brethren, will, naturally, and perhaps not altogether unjustly, be regarded as more zealous against schism, than against irreligion; — as careless whether their brethren be Christians, provided they be not sectaries.

We sometimes indeed hear it urged, in reply to this, that in some of the places respecting which the complaint is made, the churches are not filled; so that though they *would* be inadequate to the wants of the population, supposing all were well disposed to the Establishment,

there is even more than a sufficient supply for as many as choose to avail themselves of it; the rest being manifestly Dissenters, not from necessity, but from choice. But any man of judgment who considers the case attentively and candidly, will readily perceive how fallacious it would be to conclude, on such grounds, that the deficiency in question had originally no share in introducing or multiplying sectaries; or that the removal of it would have no tendency to diminish the number. When the ill-supplied spiritual wants of a large population afford an inviting opportunity, dissenting teachers take occasion to establish themselves; and the fire which is thus kindled in the dry tree, may subsequently extend to the green. The sectaries come not to *supply* our deficiencies, but to *take advantage* of them;—not merely as occupiers of a waste spot, but as invaders, ambitious of conquest; though they first assail that part of the frontier which is undefended. It cannot be expected that, when once established, they will not labour strenuously, and often successfully, to increase their party, by drawing over churchmen to their side: and thus the waters which

by being confined within too narrow a channel, have once begun to overflow, may in time form such a breach in its banks, as shall at length draw off the whole stream into a different course.

And no less fallacious would it be to conclude, that to make an adequate provision such as we are speaking of, to meet the wants of our population, would have no tendency to recall into the fold those who have strayed. For, not to mention that the fault, if it still remained, would *then* rest entirely with *them*, the very circumstance of their perceiving that the members of the Church take an interest in their spiritual welfare,—display a zeal no less active than that of sectaries, and more free from any suspicion of impure motives,—and are forward to make pecuniary sacrifices in the cause of religion,—would at least excite their attention, and would be likely to awaken their respect and their gratitude,—to soften all unfriendly prejudices,—and thus to prepare their minds for the reception of the truth.

Can there be any one who will dare to say that they do not *deserve* such pains being taken



for their conversion, because they were to blame in deserting the Church on insufficient grounds? And will he be content to be judged himself before God's tribunal, on the same principle, of receiving no more favour than he can in strict justice claim? In fact had the Apostles shewn no patient forbearance towards inattention or perversity, and refused to labour in the instruction of any except those who had made the most of all their advantages, and had sought for truth with the utmost diligence and candour, it is to be feared that comparatively very few either of Jews or Gentiles would have been converted.

With respect to the persons of whom the duty in question is especially required, and the manner in which it should be performed, in each particular case, it would neither be possible, nor desirable, on the present occasion, to lay down rules. Each man's conscience must decide as to the nature and extent of his own obligations; only let it be well considered in the first place whether there *is* not an obligation, *somewhere*;—whether every costly work, which is not a work of necessity or of charity, is not a reproach to

this nation, so long as the want I have been speaking of remains, in any one instance, unsupplied ;—and whether we ought not therefore, somewhat to moderate our boasting and self-congratulation on account of what has been lately accomplished in this way ; and to feel, as a Body, more of sorrow and shame that so much should still remain to be done.

III. Lastly, our zeal must be free from all personal bitterness, illiberal bigotry, and all those faults in short which have been formerly described as constituting and as promoting party-spirit. It is a difficult, but a most important duty, to steer the middle course between lukewarmness and repulsive severity ;—to oppose Dissenters *as such*, without being wanting in charity towards them as men, and as Christians ;—to be steady in maintaining the sinfulness of schism, yet without censuring as unpardonable those who fall into it ;—to “ mark and avoid those who cause divisions among us,” yet without any narrow-minded and hostile aversion. But this difficulty, which is one of our appointed trials, must not be allowed to discourage us. He

“ who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,” and laboured so zealously, yet so patiently, to convert men to the truth, may surely expect a similar union of charity with zeal from his followers. He who is deficient either in persevering activity in the cause of true Religion, or in discreet and conciliatory mildness, has not profited as he ought by the examples of our Lord and of his Apostles.

On the rules to be observed for thus conciliating those opposed to us, without compromising the truth, or appearing to countenance error, it is not necessary at present to enlarge ; having treated fully in some former lectures of the cautions requisite, generally, in our treatment of those who differ from us ; the application of which to the case of dissenters from our Church is sufficiently obvious.

I will conclude therefore by briefly mentioning one principle, which, though in the present day, it would be admitted by almost every man when distinctly stated, is yet in practice perpetually overlooked ; and from the neglect of which, men of opposite dispositions are led into opposite errors. The principle I mean is, that as

Christ's "kingdom is NOT OF THIS WORLD<sup>f</sup>," legal coercion is an improper instrument for producing conformity to the Church, or assent to her doctrines. This, as a general maxim, the majority would, I trust, not be disposed to deny : yet if it were practically kept in view, two contrary mistakes, which are very prevalent, would be avoided. On the one hand, the legal toleration which our laws very wisely afford to Dissenters, —determining that no man shall be liable to punishment for his religious opinions, but shall

<sup>f</sup> It is with wonder, with grief, and with shame, that I have seen this declaration of our Lord's, interpreted as strictly confined to the *present tense*, and as uttered with a kind of mental reservation, that He meant his kingdom to become *hereafter* one "of this world," maintained by secular coercion.

"But the very idea is blasphemous, of attributing such a subterfuge to Him who 'came into the world that He might bear witness of the truth.' The immediate occasion indeed of our Lord's *making this declaration* to Pilate, was his desire to do away the expectation so strongly prevailing both among Jews and Gentiles, of a temporal Messiah about to establish a triumphant kingdom : but no occasion would have led Him to make the declaration, had it not been *true* : and it would *not* have been true, had He meant no more than that his kingdom was spiritual, in the sense of its having dominion over the souls of men, and holding out the glories and the judgments of the other world ; for this was what the infidel

be accountable for them only to his own conscience and to God,—seems to have led many to consider both Orthodoxy and Conformity as matters of no great consequence in a moral point of view : as if, because the question is, and ought to be, left to our individual discretion, we were not most awfully responsible for our use of that discretion. Now to conclude thus, of any doctrines, or of any nonconformity, that they are not sinful, because they ought not to be punishable by law, what is it but to imply that if they *were* sinful, they ought to be punishable by law ? which is to allow, in other words, the propriety of employing coercion in religious matters ; and thus to mistake the nature of Christ's kingdom.

Jews expected, and expect to this day ; they look for a kingdom both of this world and also of the next ;—for a Messiah who shall bestow on his followers not only worldly power and splendour, but also the spiritual blessings of a future state, besides. They did indeed expect the Messiah to reign over them for ever in bodily person : but the main part of their expectation would have been fulfilled, had He merely *founded* a temporal kingdom, and delegated (as the Lord did of old, to the Kings) his power, to his anointed, in whom his Spirit should dwell. Jesus accordingly not only *claimed spiritual* dominion, but *renounced* temporal : He declared not merely that his kingdom is of the *next* world, but that it is *not* of *this* world."—*Errors of Romanism*, Ch. v. § 4.

On the other hand, the very same mistake leads men of contrary sentiments into an opposite error. Whoever, in his zeal for the Church, is disposed to treat Dissenters, either individually or collectively, with any degree of harshness,—to seek to influence them by any secular motives,—either of fear or of hope,—to appeal, in short, to their self-interest;—whoever grudges the toleration extended to them,—or endeavours to molest them in any way, and to abridge their civil rights, further than may be strictly requisite for self-preservation, on the ground of the erroneousness of the tenets maintained,—is, virtually, if not avowedly, drawing the conclusion, that heresy and schism ought to be checked by coercion, because they are in themselves sinful. Now this is precisely the converse of the mistaken inference above-mentioned, that since they ought *not* to be so checked, they are not to be considered as sinful: and both these errors spring from the very same misapprehension concerning the respective provinces of legal and of religious restraint, and concerning the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom.

The legitimate modes of warfare by which we are to “contend for the faith,” are those which

have been alluded to in this discourse; *viz.* by an exemplary life,—by zeal tempered with discretion, in persuading, exhorting, instructing,—and by manifesting a charitable, conciliatory, and, in short, truly Christian spirit.

It is not enough however that we “walk in wisdom towards those that are without” the pale of our Church, unless we are also most careful to preserve internal concord among ourselves. Nothing will more weaken our efforts in behalf of the Church against her opponents, than intestine divisions: which, besides that they draw off the attention of the members of any society from the common cause, will also dispose those most violent in party, to welcome the aid of foreign auxiliaries against a rival faction; while they furnish to the adversary a theme of triumphant reproach.

Discreet conduct therefore in what relates to parties within the Church being of such high importance, and that case differing in some remarkable circumstances from the foregoing, the subject will be reserved for a distinct consideration in the concluding lecture.

## LECTURE VIII.

### DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH.

---

1 COR. i. 12, 13.

*Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?*

THE Apostle's admonitions to the church of Corinth, both in this passage and in several others of the same Epistle, are of the highest importance to Christians of every age and Country. But in order to appreciate them rightly, and apply them profitably to ourselves, we must keep in mind two circumstances which are very often, practically at least, overlooked: *viz.* first that the Apostle is not here accusing his converts



of holding any *erroneous doctrines*, but of divisions, party-spirit and contentions: secondly, that he does not seem to be alluding to any open schism as having taken place among them, but merely to intestine discord;—not, in short, to any separation *from* the Church, but to disunion *within* the Church.

These circumstances, I say, ought constantly to be remembered, in our application of Paul's precepts; not, of course, with any view of depreciating the importance of a right faith, and extenuating the evil of heresy; nor of implying that the sinfulness of schism is diminished by an avowed secession from the Church; but to guard against the mistake, (by no means unfrequent,) of too hastily setting our conscience at rest by the plea of being neither heretics nor dissenters. For it is not uncommon to hear men appeal to the soundness of their doctrine, and their strict conformity to the Church, when they would clear themselves from any imputation of being promoters of division; though perhaps there is, notwithstanding, so much of the spirit of party in their proceedings, that they are introducing, or preparing the way for, all that train of evils

which have been formerly described. If, like the Corinthians, who said, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," they range themselves under distinct leaders, and distinct denominations, welcoming as brethren those who adopt a certain fixed phraseology, and regarding with bigoted aversion or jealousy, all others, they may, without forsaking either the Church or its doctrines, be guilty of fostering discord, and of manifesting that carnal spirit which the Apostle so strongly reprobates.

I have noticed in a former discourse the arguments by which the separation of Christians into parties is sometimes defended or excused; *viz.* that it is necessary for the friends of religious truth to combine, for the better promotion of their object; and that a party must be opposed by a party; lest those who are weaker, both in numbers and in cause, should prevail, by firm union and cooperation, against the insulated efforts of those who are on the right side. Now it is most important to remember, that the advantages proposed by such a combination are secured (as far as that is possible without more than counterbalancing disadvantages,) by the

union of those who hold the orthodox faith in the bond of such a society as our Church; and that consequently the above arguments will not justify (unless further reasons can be shewn for it) the subdivision of one *Church* into sundry *parties*. I say, such a society as *our Church*; because there may be, and in fact are, Christian communities so constituted, that the most fundamental differences of doctrine may creep in, without occasioning any formal separation; so that those who are nominally members of the same Christian society, may in reality be as widely at variance on the most essential points of faith, as any, the most hostile, sects. Without articles of Religion,—without a creed, or an established liturgy, a Church may remain *ONE* indeed, as long as her members happen to coincide in their sentiments; but, as they must be expected, in course of time, to slide insensibly into a variety of different tenets, so, when this has taken place, their union becomes an empty name. But this is not the case with the Church of England. She furnishes on certain points a common authority, to which all her members may appeal. Articles of faith, and a Liturgy,

furnish, so far as they are wisely framed, a barrier against the intrusion of any material error; it being unlikely that those who honestly conform to both, should entertain any such fundamentally different notions as ought to preclude them from belonging to the same religious community, and holding together as becomes a Christian brotherhood. If indeed a mere *assent* and subscription to certain formularies were all that was required, a gradual departure from the spirit of these, if not from the letter, might often take place unobserved. But a well-framed Liturgy which is in constant use, operates as a continual check upon the preacher,—a corrector of his errors, if he venture to teach any thing inconsistent with it,—a reprover of his negligence, if he omit, or slightly pass over, any important doctrine,—a guide, to direct him to spiritual truth. A Liturgy ought to be such as to afford not only a help to congregational worship, but also a pattern of zealous and earnest, yet sober-minded, and calm, and rational Christian instruction; and to be in short, a standing monitor both to the minister and his congregation; which serves, according to the existing

circumstances, either to prevent, or to detect and tacitly censure, or as far as possible to supply, any deficiencies in the preacher.

If therefore the charge so often brought forward even by those who profess a complete approbation of the genuine doctrines of our Church, that the national Clergy do not preach the Gospel, be in any instance well founded, or if in any instance the doctrines of the Gospel are debased by the admixture of fanatical extravagancies,—in either case, the Minister, when he is reading the Liturgy, testifies with his own mouth against the errors of his own preaching. And thus the congregation are warned either to supply what is wanting, or to reject what is faulty, or to inquire respecting what is doubtful; or, if the occasion call for it, to lay a complaint before the proper authorities.

As far as human means can be effectual, it seems scarcely possible that better provisions than a Liturgy and Articles may afford, could be made against the suppression or perversion of Gospel truth; or at least against the necessity of having recourse, for the sake of opposing such evils, to the formation of subordinate associations,

and party-distinctions within the Church. And when any such has arisen, there seems no sufficient reason for raising an opposite party to counteract the evil, if the Church itself thus furnishes a sufficient bond of union, and acknowledged common authority. And if any Church does *not* sufficiently furnish this,—if its formularies are in any respect defective, or ill-adapted to the present times, that is a reason for endeavouring to *remedy* the defect, and to improve those formularies, so as to fit them for their proper purpose, rather than for introducing such division into the Church as they were expressly designed to prevent. The risk thus incurred (if it be not something more than a risk) of widening the breach,—of strengthening instead of weakening the party we oppose,—of plunging, in the heat of a contest, into the contrary extreme from theirs,—of diminishing Christian charity,—and of drawing off men's attention from the essentials of religion to controversial bickerings,—is not in this case counterbalanced by any adequate benefit.

Sometimes however we find it urged by men who profess to admit these principles, that they

themselves seek not to form any separate party within the Church; nor pretend to more than to be genuine Churchmen; but that those whom they combine to oppose, are disguised sectaries, and covert heretics; outwardly professing indeed an attachment to our Church, but in reality holding sentiments hostile to the spirit of her doctrines and institutions. But it should be remembered, that, on the one hand, if any thing be taught or practised which can be proved contrary to the authorized formularies of the Church, this evil can be checked in a regular way, according to the constitution of that Church, without any need of forming a party for the purpose; and that on the other hand, if nothing of this kind can be proved, we are neither honouring nor serving the Church by combining against any such concealed hostility. We are not honouring her, because we are in fact implying that her Articles and Liturgy are so defective as to permit those who conform to them to be nevertheless fundamentally erroneous: nor are we effectually serving her, because we are setting a dangerous example of presumption, which an opposite party may easily follow.

*They* may as easily contend on *their* side, that, of all who profess conformity, they alone are the genuine Churchmen; and that *their* interpretation of the language of the Articles and Liturgy,—their judgment as to the true spirit of them,—are alone to be received as correct.

Some varieties of opinion, no doubt, exist, and must ever be expected to exist, among the members of our Church; nor would it be possible, were it desirable, that any religious community should be so constituted as completely to preclude all such differences. But our reformers seem to have designed to leave a certain latitude on points which they regarded as not of fundamental importance; and if we would approve ourselves genuine disciples of those illustrious men, we must not seek to narrow the basis on which they reared their noble edifice, nor to exclude any whom they intended to admit. As however there are some differences which do not, so there are also others which do, imply the existence of principles adverse to the spirit of our Church; and the prevalence of these ought doubtless to be guarded against." For I would not be under-



stood to contend that all varieties of doctrine are to be regarded with indifference, as long as those who maintain them profess their adherence to the Church; only let not these be made a plea for the formation of parties; which seldom fail to produce greater evils than those they propose to remedy. By reference then to the Articles and the Liturgy, let each false doctrine or irregular practice be exposed and checked, as it arises; not however by an appeal to these, avowedly human, compositions; as if they were to decide (instead of the Scriptures themselves) what doctrines are to be *received* as part of the Christian faith; but as decisive of the question, who ought, and who ought not, to remain a *member of our Church*<sup>a</sup>. But let not those who appear sincerely desirous of adhering to that Church be either driven into dissent by being hastily charged with it, or formed into a party within the Church by being opposed in the spirit of party.

I. On the means of preventing or mitigating the spirit of party in the Church, it is not

<sup>a</sup> See Errors of Romanism, Ch. iv. § 7.

necessary here to enlarge ; as the subject has been fully discussed in the preceding discourses ; and as it is easy to apply the rules there laid down, to the case now before us. It will suffice therefore to touch briefly on a few of the cautions most important to be observed ; and to offer some remarks as to their application in the present state of the Church.

1. Our first care should be, to avoid all extremes. Extremes in doctrine, extremes in practice, extremes even in manner, besides being in themselves faulty, have also a strong tendency not only to combine into a party those who approve of them, and who are of a disposition to go all lengths in that which suits their inclinations, but likewise (by a reaction which seldom fails to take place,) to encourage opposite extremes, and generate opposite parties. Excessive austerity, and excessive self-indulgence ;—morality without faith, and faith without morality ;—overscrupulous attachment to forms, and disorderly contempt of forms ; these and many similar extremes both in preaching and practice, are always found mutually to promote each other, and to separate into hostile parties

those who fall into them<sup>b</sup>. So plain indeed are the lessons both of reason and of experience, on this point, that they would not perhaps be so often disregarded, were it not that (in some measure perhaps through the ambiguity of language) *moderation* is so frequently confounded with insincerity, indifference, or timidity ; — indiscretion and extravagance, with decision of character, and an unhesitating, uncompromising, devoted zeal. And thus while the lukewarm and careless censure those who are zealous and energetic, as prone to extremes, men of a more

<sup>b</sup> “ Let no minister think it a proof of success or of faithfulness to the Gospel, that he retains one class of his congregation, and disgusts the other ; but rather, if such should unhappily be the case, let him examine his conduct with scrupulous anxiety, lest some imprudence even in the declaration of the truth,—some want of conciliation in the performance of the commission entrusted to him, may have deprived him of that blessed reflection and highest consolation, ‘ *I take you to record this day, I am pure from the blood of all men,*’ Acts xx.” Sumner’s Apostolical Preaching, c. iii. — I gladly take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the practical utility of this excellent treatise, as well as to the good sense and candour which it evinces ; and of acknowledging my obligations to it for many of the principles laid down, and arguments adduced, in the course of these Lectures.

ardent temperament, on the other hand, are sometimes apt to accuse of lukewarmness, such as are perhaps no less active and earnest than themselves, but more careful to preserve in their sentiments and conduct the golden *Mean*. No one however need be at a loss how to regulate his behaviour on this point who has before him the example of the Apostle Paul. *He* certainly cannot be suspected of being lukewarm,—of a want of hearty and thorough devotedness to his Master's cause,—or of not setting before his hearers “the whole counsel of God;” yet he neither so preached faith in the meritorious sacrifice of Christ as to omit enforcing the necessity of personal holiness, nor so preached good works as to lead men to trust in them for salvation: he did not so teach the doctrines of assurance, and of spiritual influence, as not to exhort them to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling;” nor did he so dwell on the importance of their own anxious exertions, as to keep out of sight the doctrine, that “it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;”—or to be backward in expressing his full confidence that “He who

had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Christ." In all points, in short, he is as striking an example of the discretion which steers a middle course between contrary excesses, as he is of sincere, and earnest, and uncompromising zeal.

The natural tendency of all men, when disgusted with the extravagances of one extreme, to rush into the opposite, is to be counteracted by constantly keeping in mind, that when any error or absurdity becomes prevalent, there is a very strong presumption at least that it must owe that prevalence, in part, to some admixture of truth and reason. And in fact the *more* unreasonable and extravagant any system may be, the stronger is the presumption that this absurdity must be blended with something just and rational which gives it currency. We must be careful therefore not to cast away the gold with the dross ; but diligently to ascertain, and carefully to separate and preserve, whatever is valuable in the mass.

2. And hence arises another rule, of very high importance, which is too frequently overlooked ;

that, instead of abstaining from all mention of such important doctrines as have been the most perverted and abused,—or regarding them with suspicion, and touching but slightly on them, as *dangerous* in their tendency, we should be, on that very account, the more diligent and constant in enforcing them. The great doctrines of justification by faith and of spiritual influence, afford a most remarkable instance to illustrate what has been said. How absurdly and how mischievously they have been perverted by enthusiasts, is but too well known; and it is to be feared that many, who are far from rejecting those doctrines, have yet been thus led to regard them as unsafe, and, in their teaching, to keep them very much in the back-ground. Whereas they ought for this very reason to teach them the more assiduously; not only because the neglect, is no less an evil than the abuse, of them, but because the very best security against that abuse is to preach the doctrines rationally, in their genuine and uncorrupted form<sup>c</sup>. Indeed

<sup>c</sup> In the vast savannahs of America, travellers are often, it is said, threatened with destruction from fires, which having

the Champions of truth may derive from the Advocates of error many a useful lesson for counteracting the progress of that error, if they will but study to imitate whatever there is of good in the system of their opponents, while they avoid the evil.

3. To these cautions should be added, a disposition to make the most considerate and candid allowance for differences of taste and temper, such as were noticed in a former discourse ; differences which, when good-sense and charity are not wanting, are rather an advantage than a detriment to the common cause ; but which, in the absence of these, are perhaps a more frequent occasion of mutual aversion and intestine discord, than even the most decided disagreement in matters of faith. If then we

been kindled by some accident, among the luxuriant but sun-scorched vegetation, spread, before the wind, with a rapidity which precludes all hope of escape by flight. Their only resource, when thus pursued by the conflagration, is, to kindle the grass *before* them, and thus leave the flame which follows them no fuel to sustain it. An analogous expedient to this may in many cases prove equally successful.

are sincerely desirous of preventing, as far as in us lies, these ill effects, it must be our study to restrain within due bounds our *own* peculiarities, rather than to criticise too strictly those of another; to judge favourably of those who differ from us in moral or intellectual character, where there is nothing sinful in such difference; and if *they* offend us by narrow-minded and uncharitable self-conceit, to be careful that we are not guilty of the same offence towards them.

4. Another branch of charity most essential for the preservation of unity and peace in the Church, is, to avoid as far as possible all imputation of bad motives. For “charity thinketh no evil;” *i. e.* puts the most favourable interpretation that the case will allow, on the conduct of another; and even where that conduct is faulty, is unwilling to attribute it to the worst intentions. The fact is, that since scarcely any human action springs entirely from a single motive,—what is right, having usually some alloy of human infirmity, and what is wrong, not unfrequently, some mixture of good,—almost every one’s conduct will admit of two interpretations.



Many a man's activity, for instance, in matters connected with religion, may be attributed either to zeal for God's honour and service, or to a restless and busy disposition, and a love of display; and there may be truth in each supposition, though neither be the whole truth. Men's self-partiality generally leads them to give the more favourable explanation of their own motives; and an uncharitable temper too often tempts them to put the harsher construction on another's. Now if we not only charge with the worst intentions those whose conduct is in any respect censurable, but assign bad motives also (as may often be done with much plausibility) even to the best actions of those against whom we have a prejudice, we are evidently taking the most effectual means to promote mutual ill-will and division.

If therefore it is our object to prevent these evils, we must not only abstain from hastily forming any such harsh judgments, but even where we cannot but suspect corrupt motives, still, we should abstain as much as possible from openly imputing them, and thus exciting acrimonious feelings: especially when the conduct

resulting from these motives, whatever they are, is, in itself, good : we should “rejoice that Christ is preached,” even when we believe that He is “preached of envy and strife.” And even when this is not the case,—when any one’s conduct is such as to call for censure,—still it is not only charitable, but also expedient, with a view to promote peace, that some credit should, if possible, be given for good intentions. It may be that he deserves this credit ; but if not, still it is possible that he *will* deserve it ;—that being thus mildly reminded of what his motives *ought* to be, he may be more profited by this gentle and oblique admonition, than by a severe rebuke.

5. Another point respecting which the most constant watchfulness is requisite, in those who would maintain harmony and union among Christian brethren, is one which has been already mentioned in the former lectures ; *viz.* the employment of such terms and phrases as have been made, or are likely to become, the badges of a party. The powerful influence of these, as it were, *technical* terms, in producing and keeping alive, and aggravating the spirit of party, has been already noticed ; and the mischievous

effects set forth, of adhering<sup>d</sup> to any such fixed modes of expression.

But there is another caution belonging to this head which must not be omitted, as it is of no small importance, and is often neglected by those whose intentions are the most pure. There are many who systematically abstain altogether from the use of such terms as have been thus drawn into the service of a party, and made the Shibboleth by which the members of it are mutually recognized. Now such a procedure is not surely the most likely to break down party-distinctions; but tends rather to establish them the more firmly, by strictly confining the words and phrases in question to that use to which they have been thus appropriated. The most effectual method by which to defeat the object of one who should design to form or support a distinct party, is, for those who do not belong to it, not only not to avoid, but even studiously to employ the characteristic language of that party; sometimes, if

<sup>d</sup> Mr. Foster, in his *Essay on the aversion of men of taste to evangelical Religion*, has some excellent observations (Letters third and fourth) on the peculiarities of language adopted by divines; with a view to some other disadvantages attending it.

there be in it no intrinsic unfitness) in the *same* sense in which it is used by them ; sometimes, and perhaps oftener, (if the general rules of language permit,) in a *different* sense ; sometimes again, employing, in both cases, *other*, equivalent, terms also ; studying to *vary* as much as possible (so that no impropriety nor ambiguity be admitted) the modes of expression adopted, for conveying the same sense. By this means, the use of the terms in question will speedily lose its peculiar force and significance as indicative of a certain set of opinions : and besides that we shall avoid those other ill consequences formerly mentioned<sup>e</sup>, as resulting from such a restricted employment of a certain peculiar phraseology, its influence as the badge of a party will be destroyed.

6. The last caution I shall suggest for the prevention of party-spirit within the Church, and which is closely allied indeed to the foregoing, but which is too important not to be distinctly mentioned, is, to avoid as much as possible the *names* of parties : I mean, not merely that we should abstain from *assuming* any such distinctive appellations, but also that we should

<sup>e</sup> Lecture VI.

be very much on our guard against contributing to *bestow* them. However justly descriptive, and however unexceptionable in themselves, any such terms may be,—from whatever causes they may have arisen,—by whomsoever they may have been first applied, whether reproachfully or boastfully,—their tendency to form and to maintain parties, can hardly be disputed. It is better therefore that the use of them should be as far as possible avoided. I say, as far as possible, because many of them have been so established by long usage, that it would often be difficult to abstain from them without much obscure circumlocution: but even in this case much good may be effected by a constant care to avoid introducing them *unnecessarily*. This plan, if steadily pursued, will have a tendency to bring many of them, gradually, at least into comparative disuse.

Of the terms in question some are *framed* expressly for the occasion; such as those which are derived from the names of founders or leaders of parties; as Calvinist, Arminian, Hutchinsonian: these would be, if the plan now suggested were adopted, employed as seldom as possible;

and where circumstances will admit of it, discontinued altogether. Others again are words taken from common use, employed, as logicians speak, in the *second intention*, and *appropriated* as appellations of parties: these should be, in conformity with the above rule, employed very frequently, but in their ordinary and *unappropriated* sense; with a view to do away the force of them as names of parties. For the oftener they occur, when not used in that restricted sense, the less fitted they will be to convey that sense. We should by no means therefore avoid the use of such terms as, “ Serious,” “ Evangelical,” “ Religious,” or, “ Orthodox;” but carefully abstain from using them to designate particular parties in the Church, or sets of opinions. And we should not only refrain from gathering round the standard of a party, like the Corinthians, who said, “ I am of Paul, and I, of Apollos,” and refuse any distinctive appellation but that of “ Christians of the Church of England,” but we should also be careful not to lend our aid, by *bestowing* any such appellations<sup>f</sup>,

<sup>f</sup> However *reproachful* any appellation may be in its first origin, we must not conclude that, when established by use as

to the combination into a party of those whose opinions or practices we may think objectionable.

And if ever an occasion occurs, (for occasions undoubtedly sometimes do occur,) which calls for a deviation from our general plan, and renders it expedient for the advocates of any right measure, or the opponents of any alarming

the name of a party, it will not be voluntarily retained, and boastfully cherished, by those who are attached to that party. The name of "Quaker," for instance, which was originally applied in derision, is no longer regarded, by the members of that sect, as reproachful. And such titles as "Saints," "Evangelical," "Liberal," &c. originally applied in bitter *irony*, are the more easily turned to the purpose of those on whom they are bestowed, because, as soon as these readily adopt them, they lose their ironical force and become laudatory.

On the other hand it should be remembered, that however honourable, and at the same time fairly applicable, in itself, any appellation may be,—however clearly it may describe the characteristics which *ought* to belong to every Christian, as, for instance "orthodox" or "evangelical,"—it cannot be innocently *assumed* as the badge of a party. Those of the Corinthians who said, "I am OF CHRIST," using this title *to distinguish them from other members of the same Church*, were no less censured than those who said, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos."

abuse, to combine for the purpose of accomplishing their object, we should nevertheless not lose sight of that rule; but carefully avoid either assuming any distinctive appellation, or in any other way incurring the risk of giving unnecessary *permanence* to such a combination. We should on the contrary take especial care that it be dissolved as soon as the object proposed has been effected. For from the operation of that principle of our nature which has been formerly described, and against which we should be ever on our guard, there is a strong tendency in parties to *perpetuate* themselves, when the circumstances which gave rise to them have ceased to exist, and when, consequently, they can no longer answer any good purpose, but may be productive of unqualified evil.

II. With respect to the parties actually existing in our Church, an attempt to characterize them distinctly, and to describe fully the respective faults which are most prevalent in each, would not only be invidious, and perhaps mischievous, but would in fact be in some degree foreign to the purpose of these lectures. It



would be invidious, inasmuch as it might contribute to the too common mistake of unfairly classing among the members of a party those who are not devoted adherents of it; and attributing to them an entire adoption of sentiments with which they only partially coincide: and it might be productive of mischief, by combining more strongly those who are thus classed together and distinctly recognized as a party. And as for the peculiar faults to which each class respectively are the most prone, these, how great and dangerous soever, do not so properly fall under our present consideration, as that one fault which is common to all, the Spirit of Party. A very brief mention therefore will suffice of some of the most prominent of two opposite classes of errors, (opposite, I mean, chiefly, as being the errors of *persons* who are opposed to each other,) which in the present day call for especial caution in avoiding them.

1. On the one side then, we should be warned against, first, the fault of not only introducing religious conversation injudiciously, indiscriminately, and with something of irreverent familiarity, but also of employing in it constantly that

fixed and uniform phraseology, which has been above spoken of; and regarding with suspicion, as irreligious, all who do not adopt the same set of expressions.

2. Another fault commonly to be met with in the same persons, is their permitting a vicious party spirit to swallow up that just and proper social-feeling,—that attachment to the Church, which they ought to cherish: so that while they regard with jealousy or aversion even the most sincerely pious members of that Church, who do not coincide in their peculiar views, they make light of the guilt of schism, and are forward to give the right hand of fellowship to dissenters from her communion, provided they will but adopt those peculiar views, and make common cause with their party.

3. An unreasonable and injudicious austerity of manners, and a disposition to confound together things sinful in themselves, things merely inexpedient, or dangerous, and things indifferent, is another error which often accompanies the foregoing; and which is sometimes productive of very serious ill-consequences, by producing feelings of disgust towards Religion

itself, and by driving many (according to the principle above laid down) into the opposite extreme<sup>g</sup>.

4. There are also two faults in the preaching of some well-intentioned Ministers, which those most frequently fall into who are characterised by the peculiarities above-mentioned. The one is the error which has been treated of in a former lecture<sup>h</sup>, of attempting to *explain* too much, — of overlooking the boundaries of the human faculties ;—and by presumptuously endeavouring fully to develop the most sublime and inscrutable mysteries of our Religion, affording matter of triumph to the infidel, and of perplexity to weak brethren.

5. The other fault is that of those who confine themselves too much to the inculcation of a few fundamental doctrines ;—whose preaching is so exclusively *elementary*, that they scarcely proceed beyond the first rudiments of the Christian faith ; and are perpetually occupied in laying the foundation, while they forget to rear the superstructure : so that sometimes a

<sup>g</sup> See Sumner's Apostolical Preaching, c. 8.

<sup>h</sup> Lecture VI.

multitude of discourses from a preacher of this description will be found to be, in substance, but *one*; all being strictly confined to the same topics, and differing merely in the order of their recurrence. That this fault is less pernicious than the opposite one, of *omitting* the great fundamentals of Christianity, must be distinctly acknowledged; but it is no less certain that it is a fault; and how much such a practice is at variance with that of the Apostles, no one who carefully and candidly studies their writings can doubt. In fact we may even lead our hearers into Antinomianism and the like pernicious errors, with which we are not at all affected ourselves, if we lay before them a partial and imperfect view of the doctrines of the Gospel. The preaching of the Truth will not produce its appropriate effects, unless we are careful to preach the *whole* Truth, as well as nothing but the Truth.

The faults to be guarded against on the opposite side, being of course, generally speaking, the contrary extremes to those just mentioned, it is not necessary to enter into any full description of them; such as, a disposition to dread, as

savouring of Methodism, any mention of religious subjects, except on the most solemn occasion, and in the most sacred places;—a leaning towards over-indulgence, and unsafe, if not sinful, compliance with the prevailing fashions of the world, from an excessive dread of the imputation of being “righteous overmuch,” without sufficient care to keep on the safe side in doubtful matters;—and a tendency towards that erroneous attachment to the Church, which is ready to tolerate in those who are free from any taint of schism, and vehemently hostile to all sectaries, if not gross vice, at least the absence of sincere and vital Christianity; and to have but little fear either of lukewarmness or religious ignorance, in comparison of heterodoxy or dissent<sup>i</sup>. It is to be observed however, that many who are by no means chargeable with any such laxity of sentiment as this, manifest, nevertheless, on the same side, much of the same narrow-minded bigotry and party-spirit with those who fall into the above-mentioned excess.

The most prominent fault in the preaching of

<sup>i</sup> Errors of Romanism, Ch. v. § 8.

the class of persons now under consideration, is that which has been already adverted to; *viz.* that in their dread of enthusiastic and antinomian excesses, they are apt to keep in the back-ground the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and to dwell almost exclusively on such moral precepts, as might equally well have been delivered by a Pagan or a Jew; so that while those just mentioned lay a right foundation, without building upon it, these, on the contrary, are apt to build without a foundation. Nor are they justified in thinking it sufficient, if at the great festivals of our Church they direct the attention of their hearers to points of faith, in appropriate and distinctly doctrinal discourses. Even a more frequent statement, proof, and inculcation, of those points of faith, is far from being sufficient, if that faith be still kept *apart* from practice, as a *distinct* consideration; instead of being made, in the most conspicuous manner, the *groundwork* of it,—the motive from which it is to spring,—the tree of which it is the fruit. If we place before us, as a model, the writings of the Apostles, we shall plainly see that it is not enough that the faith should be sound, and

the conduct, right also, unless that conduct be made to arise *out of* that faith.

The faults however which have now been adverted to, as the most prevalent in the two opposite parties respectively, not only are less the appropriate subject of our present consideration, than the party-spirit which is common to both ; but are so far of less practical importance, that they may be expected to diminish in proportion as that spirit itself is subdued, which contributes, above all other causes, to foster them. It should therefore be our first and most constant care, earnestly to protest against *this* ; and to maintain a steady opposition to both parties, *as parties* ; while we study, at the same time, to preserve the most friendly union possible with the members of both, considered *as individuals* ; doing full justice to the merits of each, and carefully selecting and adopting whatever is right in their sentiments and practice. And if those who are disposed, either by their own temper, or from the result of their experience, to reckon every one among the adherents of one party or another,—find themselves perplexed and at a

loss in which class to place us<sup>k</sup>, we may regard this circumstance with self-congratulation, as a presumption that we have been successful in steering a middle course between opposite extremes, in keeping ourselves untainted with the spirit of party, and in preserving unbroken, as far as possible, the bond of charity with all men.

III. That such a system of conduct however as I have been recommending will uniformly obtain full credit from all parties, and readily succeed in producing the general conciliation at which it aims, I am far from supposing. Indeed, it would be neither honest nor wise to deny, that the middle course, which you have been all along exhorted to follow, has its own peculiar disadvantages: nor can these Lectures perhaps be more suitably closed, than by a distinct

<sup>k</sup> It is observed by Aristotle, (Pol. b. 2.) that the constitution of Sparta had its elements so nicely blended, as to leave men in doubt to what class to refer it; some calling it a Royalty, some, an Oligarchy, others reckoning it Aristocratical, and others again as rather Democratical: a strong indication, as he observes, of its being so judiciously tempered, as to keep clear of the faults of each of the simple forms of government.



statement of these disadvantages, together with the counterbalancing benefits : not only that the suggestions which have been offered may not be thought the result of over-sanguine views and miscalculation of difficulties, and may be allowed to be at least sober and deliberate ; but also that any one who is disposed to approve them, may be duly prepared for the obstacles he will have to encounter, if he practically adopts the principles I have been inculcating.

1. Let him be warned then, that he must expect to incur, if not hostility, at least unfriendly suspicion, from the violent, the narrow-minded, and the uncharitable, of all parties ; who are frequently the larger, and almost always the more forward and active, portion of each. For a time at least, he will find that every word and action will be scrutinized with uncandid jealousy, and not seldom misrepresented. By many of each party he will be considered as a disguised adversary, the more to be dreaded and disliked for not professing open hostility : while others regard him with contempt, as a weak, a lukewarm, or a timorous character, meanly seeking to retain the favour of both parties, by a partial

sacrifice of the truth ; while some again who are not disposed to judge so harshly, or so contemptuously, will yet doubt whether it be safe to afford him their hearty cooperation.

2. In addition to this disadvantage he must expect also, even when he has surmounted unfriendly *opposition*, to forfeit, for the present at least, much of the *celebrity* which he might otherwise have attained, and the desire of which is so natural to man. For, unquestionably, equal talents will obtain very unequal shares of applause, in the Advocate of a party, and in the Peace-maker. The former, besides that he is heard with partiality, and eagerly praised, by those whose cause he defends, has also the advantage, that there is in the very tone of controversy itself, something spirited and energetic, which attracts attention, and excites a general interest ; and likewise, that if by his exertions a party is formed, or revived, or raised into celebrity, he will not fail to partake of that celebrity ; and perhaps will have his name transmitted to posterity among the distinguished champions of the cause ; while he on the contrary, who is labouring to extinguish controversies, and to

suppress parties, must expect, and even hope, that if his efforts are successful, both their name and his own will be buried in peaceful oblivion. He must be ready to exclaim with the disinterested hero of classic fiction,

Hæc dira, meo dum vulnere, pestis  
Pulsa cadat, patriam remeabo inglorius urbem <sup>1</sup>.

Let him hope however that by patient zeal, he may in time wear out both Obloquy and Suspicion;—that by unconquerable gentleness, he will at length disarm hostility;—that by his firmness and activity, he will gradually do away the imputation of weakness and insincerity;—and that whenever the storm of angry passion shall subside, the steady though quiet current of sound reason will prevail. He may trust at least, that if he incur the censure of the intemperate and bigoted on both sides, the candid and judicious on both sides will support him by their approbation. And let him remember, that in proportion as he is advancing in the good opinion of the members of opposed parties, he is also promoting their benefit. In proportion as they

<sup>1</sup> Virg. *Æn.* b. 11.

become reconciled to *him*, they will also approach towards a reconciliation with each other.

And finally, let those who are disposed to regret that injustice is done to their abilities, or to their intentions,—to grieve at meeting with calumny, or with unmerited neglect,—remember, that “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known:”—that He in whose service they are engaged,—who has blessed the Peace-makers as His own children,—and “to whom all hearts are open,”—shall one day, by the brightness of His presence, clear away all obscurity, and dispel all falsehood and delusion; and that on *that* day “their Father which seeth in secret, Himself, shall reward them openly.”

S E R M O N S

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.



## SERMON I.

THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO RULERS.

---

HEB. xii. 11.

*No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.*

EVERY page of history may furnish instruction to a well-constituted mind. If the man of worldly wisdom can find there maxims of worldly conduct, and learn to judge of the future by the past, the Christian, whose mind is rightly imbued with the wisdom that is from above, may also derive from the study another and still more precious kind of knowledge, by contemplating,

in a religious point of view, the nature of man, and the moral government of God; and may supply himself with rules, not only of public expediency, but also of private duty.

To lead the mind to such contemplations, and to deduce such maxims from the most important recorded events, is no unsuitable task indeed to the historian, but is one of the proper and especial offices of the preacher: on the other hand, that which more peculiarly belongs to the historian, *as such*,—the office of not only recording unquestionable facts, but of ascertaining the truth in doubtful cases, weighing conflicting evidence, detecting the errors of received accounts, and verifying the most minute particulars that have any bearing on the events in question;—all this, I say, it is more suitable and more safe for the preacher to abstain from. Let him leave to others the business of investigating, and of clearing up history, and be content with applying to a religious use that which is already well established and generally known.

Respecting the events to which the present anniversary directs our attention, we have a sufficiency of authentic information for this



purpose. Disputable as many points may still be, there is enough, and more than enough, of what is admitted on all hands, at least by all reasonable and moderate men, to furnish abundance of profitable meditation and practical wisdom. I say, by reasonable and moderate men, because it would be impossible to take such a view of the events in question, as should coincide at once with the opposite prejudices of the perverse and violent of each party. If there be any who will not admit, that, in the unhappy civil contest we are alluding to, there were good and conscientious men on both sides, or that both sides were to a certain degree blameable;—if any should maintain, on the one hand, that Charles made no encroachments on the rights of his people, or on the other, that his condemnation to death was a lawful or justifiable measure;—such persons, as they could not be brought to acquiesce in any one view of the events in question, so neither could they, it is to be feared, be led to moralize profitably on them, till the violence of their prejudices were softened.

Omitting then all consideration of what may fairly be regarded as doubtful points, and taking

that view of the general outline of the events in question which is commonly received, among right-minded and moderate men, let us inquire with what sentiments a Christian ought to reflect on them, and what lessons he may learn from them.

A heavy judgment no doubt did this nation at that time suffer, in the calamity of a civil war, and of the other mischiefs which ensued; but both national advantages have sprung, and, if we are not wanting to ourselves, personal improvement may be derived, from the chastisement inflicted on our ancestors, by the fatherly hand of him who is wont to bring good out of evil. "No chastening," says the Apostle, "for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Very strongly indeed is our gratitude called for, when we contemplate the whole course and consequences of this chastening dispensation. We might indeed have derived a salutary warning from it, and obtained spiritual benefit, had nothing but unmixed evil (of a

temporal nature) been the result: but on the contrary, how great and how unexpected are the national advantages which we now enjoy! Let any one but consider, how many were the chances, humanly speaking, against our attaining ultimately that free, peaceful, and secure condition with which this country has since been blessed. Two parties were inflamed against each other, not by personal animosity merely, but by the most violent and rooted opposition of principles: the long duration of the war which ensued tended to inflame their mutual hostility, and to harden their hearts to acts of violence: still, hopes might have been entertained of reconciliation and peaceable adjustment, had not the blood of the unhappy King been shed; which doubtless was a measure purposely resorted to by those whose ambitious views made them adverse to any such favourable termination. They wished by this act to cut off their partisans from all chance of a compromise,—all hopes of pardon. We all know what dismal scenes of violence and anarchy ensued; yet from this chaos it pleased God ultimately to work out peace and order. Our constitution, both in

Church and State, emerged unimpaired, and with its principles more clearly ascertained, and more firmly fixed than before; and we escaped, not only at the time, but, it is to be hoped, for ever, that alternative of evils which generally concludes a civil contest; turbulent democracy, or rigid despotism.

Does not all this call for the warmest and most devout gratitude, from those at least who believe that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men?” More especially when we consider that Divine Providence was pleased to bring it about, through the instrumentality of men’s follies and crimes, rather than of their wisdom and virtue. How fortunate, that is, how providential was it, for this nation, that the intemperate violence and selfish ambition of the revolutionists of that day, which might have been tolerated in a minor degree, should have been pushed to such an excess, as effectually to open the eyes of honest men, to disgust them with their pretended doctrines of liberty, and to show them the natural consequences of a spirit of insubordination, and the advantage as well as duty of submitting to regular government. These

truths *we* also may learn, as well as our ancestors, from the contemplation of the same transactions. If we would escape the condemnation of neglecting the lesson which this page of history affords, the spirit of devout gratitude for our deliverance, which it ought to inspire, should be accompanied by the spirit of dutiful obedience (on Christian principles) to lawful authority.

With respect to the much-agitated question concerning this Christian duty of obedience, it may be observed, that at first sight, if we confined our attention to the language of Scripture, there would appear to be no room for doubt on the subject. No language can be plainer than the Apostle Peter's, when he says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:" or Paul's exhortation, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." Such expressions as these would seem to be, to a Christian at least, too decisive to admit of any dispute; especially when we consider that those rulers, for whom this divine

right to obedience was claimed, were not Christians, but Pagans. When, however, tyrants, who abused their power by the most inordinate oppression, claimed still an abject submission from their subjects, on the ground of these precepts, and when weak or perverse men so interpreted them as avowedly to make no allowance for the most extreme cases, and after having called the King “the Lord’s anointed,” so employed the phrase as to imply, that even if he were a ferocious monster, like Nero or Caligula, all opposition to his most lawless attempts would be sacrilege, the minds of many men were so revolted by these extravagancies, that they rushed into the opposite extreme, of either rejecting the authority of the Apostle, or nullifying his precepts by an unwarrantable laxity of interpretation.

Hence probably sprung the doctrine of the Social Compact<sup>a</sup>, as it was called; according to which, every member of society was to be regarded as having voluntarily waived some part of his natural independent rights, for the sake, and on the condition, of enjoying the advantages

<sup>a</sup> Vide Locke.

of good government. The stipulation therefore being for obedience on his part, and good government on the part of his rulers, he is bound in conscience, they said, by this agreement, to obey them, as long as they perform their part. And it seems to follow no less inevitably, (how far soever the advocates of this theory may have been from admitting, or intending to teach, such a conclusion,) that whenever the ruler is guilty of any fault, great or small, the compact being violated<sup>b</sup>, the subject is at once released

<sup>b</sup> “ Every violation of the compact on the part of the governor releases the subject from his allegiance, and dissolves the government. I do not perceive how we can avoid this consequence, if we found the duty of allegiance upon compact, and confess any analogy between the social compact and other contracts. In private contracts, the violation or non-performance of the conditions, by one of the parties, vacates the obligation of the other. Now the terms and articles of the social compact being no where extant or expressed; the rights and offices of the administrator of an empire being so many and various; the imaginary and controverted line of his prerogative being so liable to be overstepped in one part or other of it: the position that every such transgression amounts to a forfeiture of the government, and consequently authorizes the people to withdraw their obedience, and provide for themselves by a new settlement, would endanger the stability of

from his allegiance; the very ground of that allegiance being, by the nature of the compact itself, no other than the exact fulfilment of the corresponding stipulation on the other side. And since the governors cannot be expected to detect and proclaim their own faults, the subjects, being thus necessarily left themselves sole judges of the existence and amount of misconduct in their rulers, the ultimate result of the doctrine is, in plain words, no other than this; that the people are bound to obey the magistrate as long as they think proper: a doctrine which, if acted upon, would expose all the world to the horrors of anarchy, till a ruler should be found, not only faultless, but able to convince his subjects that he was so.

It is a convenient circumstance in this system, that it will enable its advocates, without any sacrifice of consistency, to declaim in the strongest

every political fabric in the world, and has in fact always supplied the disaffected with a topic of seditious declamation. If occasions have arisen, in which this plea has been resorted to with justice and success, they have been occasions, in which a revolution was defensible upon other and plainer principles. The plea itself is at all times captious and unsafe."—PALEY. *Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II. chap. iii. pp. 140, 141.



terms in praise of loyalty, and even to load with anathemas all who may violate its duties, and yet to reserve a gap, as it were, in the bulwark they are raising, which will allow them to pass through whenever they are disposed. Their loyalty is only conditional; and the condition, *viz.* that of perfection in the ruler, is impossible: so that this hypothetical obligation can never restrain them in real life; and the most fair-sounding professions amount, practically, to nothing at all.

“What!” they will say, “are we to acknowledge the right divine of Kings to govern wrong?” The right which is here described, purposely, in the most paradoxical and revolting form, if rationally and candidly explained, is one which we cannot deny, without denying in fact all right whatever of all governors, *as such*, to the obedience of their subjects. *E.g.* Let us deny their right to govern wrong; what then remains? “They have a right to govern well:” and who is to be the judge of the goodness of their measures? “The people, of course; since there is no third party concerned.” It must be the governed themselves who are to decide

(either in what concerns them generally, or in the case of any individual among them) on the conduct of the governor. It follows then, that every man is bound in conscience to conform to the magistrate's commands, (*recommendations* they should rather be called, on this system,) whenever he and his fellow-subjects believe in their consciences that the directions are reasonable and right. And is he not also bound in conscience, under similar circumstances, to conform to the recommendations of his neighbour, or any other private individual? The magistrate therefore will be only an adviser; and will have no more rightful *power* than any other citizen. *E. g.* Suppose a tax to be levied, (to take the example of one of the least popular acts of government,) a man is bound, it seems, in conscience to pay it, provided he understands and approves of the grounds and purpose of it, and judges that he is reasonably and properly called on to contribute: but suppose a neighbour solicits his subscription to some charity or public work, if he thinks in his conscience, or his friends assure him, that the work is a good one, and that he is fairly expected to subscribe, is he

not, in this case also, bound in conscience to comply with the solicitation? He may indeed refuse to contribute; but he cannot, without a contradiction in terms, deny that he *ought*. According to this system therefore of conditional obedience, a governor is completely on a level with a private citizen; and has, as a governor, no rights whatever.

When governors shall be so perfect, as never to propose a measure that is not faultless, and when subjects also shall be so infallible in their judgments, and so candid in their dispositions, as universally to perceive and acknowledge this perfection, then, and not till then, may a peaceable and permanent government be established on such principles.

Whatever currency this doctrine has obtained, is to be attributed, in great measure, to the misrepresentations and the perversions to which the opposite doctrine has been subjected. Of the principal of these it will be worth while to give a brief summary, after having first laid down what that doctrine is which has been thus abused by some, and misrepresented by others; in order, if possible, to give precision to those

vague notions which are afloat on the subject.

The relations existing among mankind, in which there are duties required on both sides, may be divided into two classes ; those in which the parties are mutually *responsible to each other*, and those in which they are *not*. To the former class belong all partnerships, mercantile bargains, and in short the great mass of voluntary dealings between man and man. In all these cases, not only is each party bound in conscience to the fulfilment of his part of the agreement, but, each being responsible to the other for that fulfilment, if either party fail in performing his engagement, the other is at once released from his obligation by the dissolution of this conditional compact. If a merchant, *e. g.* engage to supply another by a certain day with goods of a certain quality and quantity, at an agreed price, should he send them later than the time stipulated, or of an inferior quality, the other is not bound to make the purchase. He may indeed indulgently overlook the failure ; and may be expected in generosity to do so, if it chance to be of no great consequence ; but that

must be left to his own free choice : no one would say that he was bound by his contract, when the condition on which his promise was understood to depend, was not fulfilled.

The other class of relations is of a widely different nature. It comprehends not only that between governor and subject, but between parent and child,—between kindred in general, between husband and wife,—and between every man and his neighbours. In all these cases, there are indeed obligations on both sides, but the parties are *not* mutually responsible to each other. Parents are no less bound in conscience to take care of their children, than children to honour their parents ; and to God the parents are responsible for the performance of this duty ; but let not children suppose that every neglect of duty on the part of the parent absolves them from theirs. The fifth commandment is not conditional ; it does not say, “ Honour thy father and thy mother as long as in thy opinion they behave well.” The same is the relation between married persons : they are bound by their vows before God’s altar to mutual care, and kindness, and fidelity ; but if each party were at liberty,

on any supposed neglect or unkindness in the other, to regard the marriage as dissolved, what would become of society? In like manner also, every man is bound in conscience to make a good use of the wealth, life, and abilities, with which God has blessed him, no less than his neighbours are bound to abstain from invading his property, or injuring his person. But if (as he easily may do) he make an ill use of his property or talents, in such a manner as to be amenable to no human law, his neighbours can inflict no punishment, except blame, desertion of his society, and abstinence from friendly offices. Should they regard him as accountable to *them* for the use he makes of his property, and as having forfeited his right to it, by the neglect of his duty, all property must be at an end under such a system; since every one who might think that his neighbour did not make the best use of his wealth, would hold himself authorized to plunder him without scruple.

So also is the governor bound to make a good use of his power, no less than his subjects are, to obey him; and he is accountable to God for so doing; but not to *them*: for if this merely

conditional right to obedience be once admitted, it must, as I have already endeavoured to shew, destroy all government whatever.

The governor's power, it is true, is intrusted to him by Providence, not as so much private property, but solely and exclusively for the good of the governed ; and to *him* I would urge the different character, and the heavier weight, of the responsibility he lies under ; as being bound, not merely to have the public good *in view*, (which is the case with all, even in the management of their own property,) but to make the public good the *only* object of his government, to the exclusion of all personal considerations. And I would tell the subjects, (as the Apostle does,) that this power is indeed intrusted to the governor *for their good* ; but not intrusted *by them* : for if this were the case, and if he were responsible to *them* for the use of his power, *they* would, in fact, be the rulers, and the nominal magistrate would be but their deputy. And if a similar principle were admitted in those other cases which have been above-mentioned, the whole fabric of society must inevitably fall to ruin.

In these last cases, indeed, the principle I have been contending for is pretty generally admitted; and as it is equally applicable to the case of government, it would not probably have been so often overlooked there, but for the many perversions and misrepresentations to which it has been exposed, and the extravagant and unwarrantable lengths to which it has been pushed.

One of the erroneous notions which has been entertained respecting the precepts in question, and which has contributed to bring them into disrepute, is, that they apply exclusively, or peculiarly, to *Kings*; an absurdity so gross, that those who have never chanced to meet with it, may perhaps think it undeserving of serious attention. It is indeed almost too evident to require proof, that all magistrates and members of the legislature, lawfully constituted, have alike a divine right to obedience. It is evident not only from reason, and from the express words of the Apostle, but also from the argument he uses, *viz.* that civil government is necessary for the welfare of society. Neither monarchy nor republic can subsist without subordination; which is therefore, in both alike, constituted, by divine



authority, a moral duty. In those Countries indeed which have a King as the highest magistrate, the *highest* reverence is, on that account, due to him: but on the very same ground, a proportionate obedience and respect is no less strictly due to subordinate magistrates also, and even to the humblest ministers of the law. “Render therefore unto *all* their *due*: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.”

Another error which has tended to raise a prejudice against the doctrine of unconditional obedience, is that of extending the duty to *illegal* commands. Now it is clear, both from the nature of the case, and from the Apostle's words, that obedience is due to governors, *as such*; not from any inherent personal sanctity, but by virtue of their office. Their authority therefore resting on established law, cannot extend beyond it. Paul himself more than once insisted on his rights as a Roman citizen, and protested strongly against the illegal conduct of those magistrates who confined and punished him without trial.

If indeed a ruler exhort and recommend his subjects to do something which he cannot legally enforce, if it be not wrong and unreasonable in itself, and if he be such an one as to merit their confidence, they are right and praiseworthy in cheerfully complying with his wishes; but they have no right to stigmatize as rebels those who may think differently in any such case. If however he attempt to enforce it as a right, they will do well to withstand such a violation of the laws, as might afterwards lead to more hurtful encroachments. In fact, a *timely, steady, and mild* resistance, on *legal* grounds, to *every* unlawful stretch of power, (as in the well-known case of the ship-money,) will prove the most effectual means, if *uniformly* resorted to, for preventing the occurrence of those desperate and extreme cases which call for violent and dangerous remedies. And, though bound to obey the laws and the magistrates as long as they remain in authority, the subject is fully authorized to attempt, by all legal and constitutional means, the removal of any that he may think bad.

Lastly, another error which has been some-

times maintained by the advocates of our doctrine, and much oftener falsely attributed to them, is that of making no allowance for *extreme cases*. The soundest principles, when pressed to an extravagant excess, become absurd. If a ruler should systematically employ his power to promote the misery and ruin of his people, (which in less favoured constitutions may easily take place under the sanction of the laws, but hardly can, in this, without the violation of them,) doubtless they would not be bound to submit to the oppression of such a merciless tyrant. Though even here it were better to avoid the ambiguity and confusion which results from saying, that in such a case resistance would be *lawful*: it is better to say, that law itself should be *dispensed with*, when the abuses of it become so intolerable, as to destroy the very objects for which law is instituted. It would be fruitless, as it is needless, to attempt laying down beforehand what those cases are. Every man must judge for himself on each occasion, when it is that such an extreme case of oppression occurs, as to render submission a greater *public* evil than the violation of an important

general rule. When the occasion does not occur, (and in this country nothing is now less probable,) it is unprofitable, and worse than unprofitable, to dwell on the subject: and when it does occur, let each remember that he will be awfully responsible before the tribunal of God, not only for the justice of his decision, but also for the purity of his motives.

Let it not be said that to recognize these extreme cases is to nullify the principle formerly laid down, and make obedience depend on the good conduct of the rulers. Extreme cases do not constitute the *rule*, but the *exception*; and similar exceptions must be admitted in every general rule; and may fairly be left to the discretion of the wise and candid, without shaking the authority of the rule itself: whereas if it be once admitted that there is a mere voluntary compact between governor and subject, it will follow from the very nature of such a compact, that it is dissolved by the smallest as well as by the greatest violation of its conditions; and that though the subjects may be pleased indulgently to overlook minor faults, it must rest entirely with their own choice to shew this indulgence or not.

In the other relations formerly mentioned, few would deny that the general rule holds good; though in them also, extreme cases may occur which would *e. g.* absolve the child from obedience to his parents, and suspend a man's control over his own property. Let these exceptions be allowed; but let them be allowed *as* exceptions. Who would suffer a city to be burnt, rather than stop the conflagration by pulling down a house without the owner's leave? Who would suffer a shipwrecked crew to perish with cold and famine, rather than shelter and feed them at his neighbour's expense, before he could ask his permission? Yet how mischievous would it be to found on such cases as these a general rule, that any man may invade another's property whenever he sees an advantage in so doing!

How far resistance was or was not justified in the case now before us, it is not my purpose to inquire. Few reasonable men will be disposed to deny, on the one hand, that it was in great measure provoked by unwise and unjustifiable encroachments, and, on the other, that it was carried to an unwarrantable excess by ambitious and turbulent men. Had the moderate on each

side possessed but sufficient influence, it is probable they would have prevented or put a stop to most of the evils that ensued.

And this leads me to consider the third and last of those benefits which we ought to derive from the study of this portion of history: it ought to teach men of all parties the advantages and the duty of moderation. There will always be some men of the description of those that will learn from no experience but their own; but the wise will take a lesson from that of their ancestors. The events of that period are a most remarkable illustration of the maxim which was laid down long ago by the most judicious of the ancient philosophers, that any system cannot be more effectually overthrown than by pressing it to an unreasonable excess; and that the violent and incautious advocates of any measure are taking the sure means to defeat their own object. The supporters, he says, of an oligarchical form of government, and those of a democracy, destroy their respective constitutions, if they carry the principles of them to an immoderate length<sup>c</sup>. The candid and judicious reader may

<sup>c</sup> Arist. Pol. et Rhet.

find these truths strikingly exemplified in the history before us; which exhibits the intemperate zeal of both parties producing results opposite to those which they respectively aimed at. He may see how the bigoted advocates of established abuses, and opposers of all amendment, contributed to bring about a complete revolution; while those who were never satisfied without perpetual and total changes, at length, by their restless turbulence, occasioned the restoration of the original constitution. He will perceive how the most rash and violent supporters of the Church Establishment were in fact aiding the efforts of its enemies towards its entire overthrow; and how, on the other hand, the Presbyterian party, the most intolerant exacters of rigid uniformity, led the way, by their inveterate hostility to our Church, to the predominance of the Independents; whose system annihilated all establishment, and all uniformity, by erecting each congregation into a distinct and insulated church. Lastly, it may be clearly perceived, that while the advisers and abettors of the most violent and arbitrary measures, who would have had no bounds set to the

royal prerogative, were the chief agents in producing the total overthrow of the monarchy itself, and the violent death of their unhappy Sovereign ;—the intemperate advocates of the popular rights, who were not satisfied with any restrictions on regal power, and could brook no submission to any but a republican government, were in fact the means of establishing an absolute military despotism.

Surely men of all parties ought to learn from such a course of events, if not the intrinsic excellence of moderation, at least the prudence of it ; even if they cannot be taught that the middle way is the *best*, they may perceive from experience that it is the *safest* ; and even though not cured of an extravagant attachment to their favourite political objects, may at least learn to be cautious not to defeat those very objects by a rash and violent pursuit of them.

But in fact there would be no great difficulty in explaining the intrinsic advantages of moderation, if men's tempers could but be brought into a proper state. The fault is generally more in the heart than the head. For it is surely very intelligible in the abstract, that a man may



adhere to the mean in forming his opinions, yet not be the less sincere or less firm in maintaining them; and may be zealous for the accomplishment of an object, though he be mild and cautious in the manner of doing it. Why then are such men so often stigmatized as lukewarm, temporizing, and inconsistent? It is not from mere weakness of understanding, but from the evil passions which generate party spirit, and in turn spring from it.

Turn to the word of God, and you will find a medicine for this disease. The Gospel inculcates *humility*: am I then, let a man ask himself, distrustful of my own judgment, backward in deciding on points which I have not perfectly studied, ready to learn, open to conviction, willing to confess myself mistaken? for these are the fruits of humility. The Gospel, again, teaches *charity*: let a man then examine himself whether he is free from all bitter hostility, all jealousy and envy, love of contention, and eagerness to enjoy a triumph; whether he makes all candid allowance for others, and pities, even while he censures, their failings. The Gospel teaches disinterested *public spirit*, not only by its precepts,

but by the example of Him who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:” let every one try therefore whether his judgment is unbiassed by personal ambition, and the desire of private advantage; whether he is seeking purely the glory of God, and the welfare of his Country, or his own credit and advancement.

If these principles were but acted on, if *pride*, bitter *animosity*, and *selfishness*, were but excluded, political dissensions, though they might not be entirely suppressed, would be neither violent nor mischievous. We should much oftener attain truth, and we should never fail of attaining moderation.

Let us then be instructed by the faults and the sufferings of our ancestors, which are this day commemorated; that the chastening of the Lord may not lose its due effect on us. And let it not be forgotten, that the want of moderation will be tenfold more blameable in us than in them; not only because we have the benefit of their example, but also because we are placed in much more favourable circumstances in this respect than they were. The principles of the

constitution were not then fixed and known as they now are; the extent of the respective privileges, rights, and duties of the King and his subjects was but vaguely and doubtfully laid down. Even those who the most strongly condemn the unfortunate Charles and his adherents, cannot in fairness but acknowledge, that great allowance should be made for the uncertainty which prevailed as to the nature of the constitution; and that had he lived in the present day, he might have been an unexceptionable ruler. The same allowance ought in candour to be made for the opposite party also; many of whom may have been led into excess, partly, by having no definite view of their object, and not well knowing where to stop, and when to consider their rights as sufficiently secured.

We of the present day can never have any such excuse to plead for the want of moderation. Our rights and the rights of our governors are too clearly ascertained, to leave us any pretence for sacrificing either for the sake of the other; and if we have any thing to complain of, there are lawful and regular means of endeavouring to procure its amendment. Though our

constitution may not be faultless, nor exempt from abuses, it has at least the rare and precious advantage of containing within itself the means of its own indefinite improvement and perpetual correction, without any need of resorting to lawless violence and revolution.

Severely shall we suffer both in this world and the next, if, neglecting the lesson that is before us, we endanger, by intemperate violence on either side, the corruption or subversion of such a constitution. And let it be remembered, that since excesses on each side mutually provoke and aggravate each other, every one is responsible, not only for his own injudicious violence, but also for that which he has contributed to inflame and foster in his opponents.

Let our gratitude for the deliverances we have experienced, and the advantages we enjoy, lead us to show ourselves not unworthy of those blessings, by striving to avoid the faults of our ancestors, and to profit by their calamities. Let a spirit of obedience to our rulers, which, in this Country at least, is compatible with all reasonable liberty, be cherished on Christian principles; that is, let it appear plainly to be, as the Apostle

directs, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake :” it should not be such merely as the laws enforce, but accompanied with alacrity and respect. We are not indeed bound to profess such principles as would flatter princes into their ruin, nor to applaud or justify any thing that is vicious ; but we are bound “to do to others as we would have them do to us :” we should treat our rulers therefore as we should think it just to be treated ourselves, were we in their place ; and make allowances for the difficulties of their situation : bearing in mind, above all, that we ourselves shall have to give an account before God’s judgment-seat, not for what we think we *should* have done as rulers, but for what we *have* done as subjects. And, lastly, we should cultivate in all our conduct, and in all our sentiments, the spirit of forbearance and moderation, springing from the Christian virtues of humility, charity, and disinterested public-spirit. So shall we profit duly by the former chastening of the Lord, and obtain the promised benefit, “the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.”

## SERMON II.

THE CHRISTIAN DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LAWS.

---

DEUT. xi. 1.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.*

THE Law which Moses delivered to the Israelites, was dictated, we know, by the Almighty himself: who designed to become, for especial purposes, himself the Lawgiver and King of this his peculiar people. It was sanctioned therefore by an authority, and enforced by a power, which can accompany no human laws. For who could hope to escape detection, when transgressing or evading a law, of which the all-seeing God was

the guardian? or to be too strong for punishment, when it was his Maker who denounced it? If the people failed to detect, or were negligent in duly punishing, any offender, the Lord declared that He would Himself vindicate the honour of his law, by visiting him with those temporal judgments which formed the sanction of it; such as sickness, loss of property, and untimely death.

Moreover, this Law, and this alone, was sanctioned by reward as well as punishment. Human laws threaten, but cannot promise; because they could not make good their promises<sup>a</sup>: the only

<sup>a</sup> “ *Society could not distinguish the objects of its favour.* To inflict punishment, there is no need of knowing the motives on which the transgressor acted; but judicially to confer reward on the obedient, there is.

“ All that civil judicatures do, in condemnation to punishment, is to find out whether the act was *voluntarily* committed. They inquire not into the intention or motives, any farther, or otherwise, than as they are the indications of *volition*: and having found the act *voluntary*, they concern themselves no more with his motives or principles of acting; but punish, without scruple, in confidence of the offender's demerit. And this with very good reason; because no one in his senses can be ignorant of the principal transgressions of civil laws, or of their malignity, but by some sottish negligence that has

reward held out for obeying them is exemption from punishment, and security of person and property. But God promised, and bestowed, as rewards of obedience, all those temporal goods, which, in the ordinary course of Providence, are dispensed with great irregularity; insomuch that good conduct can only be said to be *generally* and on *the whole* more likely to secure these advantages than a contrary behaviour. Whereas,

hindered his information, or some brutal passion that has prejudiced his judgment; both which are highly faulty, and deserve punishment.

“It is otherwise in rewarding the abstaining from transgression. Here the *motive* must be considered: because as *merely doing ill* deserves punishment, a crime in the case of wrong judgment being ever necessarily inferred; so *merely abstaining from ill* cannot for that very reason have any merit.

“In *judicially rewarding*, therefore, the *motives* must be known: but human judicatures can never come to the knowledge of these but by accident: it is only that tribunal which searches the mind and the heart that can do this. Therefore we conclude, *that reward cannot, properly, be the sanction of human laws.*”—Warburton’s Div. Leg. 4to. p. 60. 1788.

The State may indeed be said to reward, or, more properly speaking, to *pay*, public *services*, (not, mere submission to the laws) by the salaries annexed to public offices; in the same manner as an individual pays wages to his servants.



under that extraordinary dispensation, those who diligently kept God's law, obtained from his especial providence, prosperity, long life, and a blessing on their offspring.

A law so established, it was clearly the interest, in the highest degree, as well as duty, of each man to obey. But it was not sufficient, it seems, that commands thus given should be obeyed according to the strict letter of them, from the mere hope of reward and fear of punishment; it was required, also, that the Israelites should feel all that devout reverence for them which their divine authority demanded; all that love and gratitude and loyalty towards their heavenly King and Lawgiver, which his condescension, in thus favouring them, deserved: "Therefore thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway:" And again, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Chap. vi. ver. 4, 5, 6. And again: "It shall come to pass, if ye shall

hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season," Chap. xi. ver. 13. And the same sort of language is held in numberless other passages.

It is plain, that under such a system of government, every reasonable and well-disposed man would feel himself bound, not only to abstain from transgressing the Law, but to conform conscientiously to the spirit and intention of it, as well as to the letter; not seeking for any evasions, but fulfilling the divine commands cheerfully and heartily, as a point of sacred duty, and not of mere prudence only. And accordingly their great historian Josephus remarks, with much truth and wisdom, on the wide difference of the system of conduct prescribed to his own people from that of the Gentiles: "WHILE ALL OTHER NATIONS," says he, "REGARD RELIGION AS A PART OF VIRTUE, THE JEWS ALONE, CONSIDER VIRTUE AS A PART OF RELIGION."

That Christians are bound to obey, in the

same manner, and on the same principle, all the precepts of our Saviour and his Apostles, no right-minded man can entertain a doubt: for our election into “the faith that is in Christ Jesus,” is a motive to affectionate and grateful obedience, from *us*, as much stronger than the election of the Israelites to be God’s peculiar people, which is urged as a reason for *their* obedience, as eternal happiness is greater than temporal prosperity, and as heaven itself exceeds Canaan. But it has been questioned, how far obedience to *human* laws is to be considered as a Christian’s duty;—whether he is bound to maintain and to reverence them as a point of conscience before God, or merely to submit to them as a matter of prudence for his own sake. Certain it is, that some persons seem to submit to the laws,—in the same manner as they do to the changes of the seasons, and the rising and setting of the sun,—merely because they cannot help it: and to make no scruple of violating or evading them, whenever they are sure of impunity; at least in the case of any act that is not clearly sinful in *itself*, antecedently to all law.

Such notions appear to have been very preva-

lent among the early converts to Christianity ; who had so far the appearance of an excuse for it, that the magistrates who enforced the laws, as well as the legislators who framed them, were not Christians, but Pagans. To these therefore they thought no respect was due : their acknowledgment of Christ released them, they thought, from obedience to all human authority ; and though they submitted, as a point of prudence, when it was necessary, with a view to avoid punishment, they did not regard their submission as any part of religious and moral duty. This notion is often alluded to in the Apostle's Epistle, and always with the strongest reprobation : " Let every soul be subject," says Paul, " unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. . . . Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake : " *i. e.* you must submit, not merely for the sake of avoiding punishment from the wrath of men, but also as a duty towards God. Peter also says, " Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's

sake :” . . . . “ as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness ;” (or, sedition) *i. e.* not regarding the freedom which Christ has brought you (which in truth is a deliverance from the bondage of sin, the world, and the Devil) as a pretext for disobedience and sedition ; “ but as the servants of God.”

Now the meaning of the sacred writers cannot have been merely, that their converts should abstain from all things that are wrong in themselves : for that would not have implied reverence for the *laws*, but would have been equally a duty, had these never existed. Their meaning must have been, that since the laws even of these Pagans (though of course in some points erroneous) were, *on the whole*, beneficial to society, therefore it was the will of God that they should be obeyed *throughout*, wherever they did not interfere with his immediate commands ; and obeyed heartily, for his sake, and as a point of Christian duty ; and that since governors are necessary to administer laws, therefore those governors, idolaters though they were, must be respected, for conscience’ sake, as God’s ministers for a good purpose. It is plain, indeed, that

when the Apostle says, “ Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil;” he is speaking, as I have said, of the *general tendency* of these human institutions ; for we know that on many occasions the rulers persecuted Christianity : and then, the Apostles set an example of open and strenuous refusal to obey them, and of a bold resistance even unto death ; and this without the least inconsistency : for since “ the servant is not above his master,” the rulers, though God’s ministers, could not have any claim to obedience, when they stood opposed to God Himself.

But do not these commands, so forcibly laid down, to “ submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake,” extend with equal or even superior authority to us of the present day ? We are not under a Pagan, but a Christian government : our laws therefore, it may be supposed, will, in many instances, be expressly regulated by a regard for the precepts of Christianity ; and will, at least, in few or no cases be decidedly hostile to it. They are not indeed, like the laws of the Israelites, the dictates of infallible wisdom ; and if in any point they are

found to be unwise and inexpedient, we are fully authorized to endeavour, by peaceable and regular means, to procure their amendment : but in the mean time we should remember, that they are at least as much sanctioned by divine authority as the laws of the Roman empire, under which the primitive Christians lived : that therefore whatever is *instituted* (unless it be plainly in opposition to our Christian duty) has a claim to our obedience and respect, for conscience' sake, on the ground that it *is* instituted ; and that, of our performance of this as well as every other duty, we shall give an account before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Some persons, however, who do not deny the Christian duty of respect for the laws, yet pay little or no regard to it *as* a Christian duty ; because the laws being enforced by coercive power, the fear of punishment leads men to obedience, even when conscientious feelings are wanting. But it is an utter mistake to suppose, that because penalties are denounced, therefore it is a matter of indifference whether men are actuated by the mere fear of these penalties, or by a higher motive : the laws are neither so *well*

obeyed, nor is the obedience that *is* paid, in itself, of so much worth, when men are influenced only by the wish to avoid punishment.

This may easily be perceived, if we but bestow a little consideration on the points in which the obedience of a good Christian differs from that of one who is not.

In the first place, his motive being different, stamps even the very same action with a far different value. Many are the *Christian duties* which a right-minded man will be practising, even when he is doing the very same things as another, who wants this principle. For, in a moral point of view, it is the disposition of the heart that is every thing: the motive, not the conduct, is the proper object of praise: external actions are signs indeed and necessary effects of a right disposition; but no one supposes that these have at all the nature of virtue, unless they proceed from a good principle. Industry and courage, *e. g.* are called by those names, and are reckoned laudable qualities, not on account of the advantageous effects merely which are produced by them, but with a view to the motives also from which they spring: for no



one would attribute industry to a machine, because it is in constant motion, or courage to a torrent, because it rushes impetuously forward ; inasmuch as these are mere inanimate Beings, which act but as they are acted upon. And if a man were impelled solely by the fear of punishment, to labour or to fight, he would not be much more entitled than these to the praise of the virtues in question.

A sincere Christian, therefore, will *make* duties, if I may so express myself, even of the most ordinary actions of life, which have nothing virtuous in them, when practised by worldly men, from worldly motives. According to Paul's precept, whatsoever he does, he "does it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto man:" and whether "he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, he does all to the glory of God." And in conforming to the laws, even where he could not do otherwise without personal danger or inconvenience, yet if he does that with zealous good will, for conscience sake, which others do from fear of punishment, he will receive that praise from the Searcher of hearts, which the others have no claim to.

Supposing then that it were possible for the very same obedience to the laws to be produced by the fear of punishment, as by conscientious principles, it might indeed, in a political point of view, be regarded as indifferent which motive operated; but it would not be at all the less important for a preacher of the Gospel, as Paul was, to instil right motives into his converts, and to make their obedience spring from a sense of Christian duty. “The law,” he says, “is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners:” that is, it is bad men alone against whom the *penalties* of the law are denounced, and whom the fear of those penalties alone can keep in that conformity to the law which a virtuous man practises from a higher motive.

In fact, however, it is very far from being true, that the laws *will* be equally well obeyed, when men are influenced only by fear of punishment. Besides that there are many cases in which the laws may be violated without any apparent risk of detection, the spirit of them also may often be evaded, without infringing the letter: so that a man who is not restrained by

conscience, may take advantage of any imperfection of a law, to defeat the intention with which it was enacted. Whereas, he who considers obedience to the laws as a part of his duty to God, and remembers that it is to Him, who cannot be deceived, and not to fallible man, that he must give an account at the last day, will be guilty of no secret violations, nor seek for any evasions, of the law, where its tendency is beneficial; but looking to the spirit as well as the letter of it, will honestly study to comply with its intentions.

Let it not be said, that though a good Christian will indeed do all this, yet there is no reason for calling his conduct a compliance with the law, and describing it as a distinct branch of duty;—for that he would have pursued the same line of conduct, as right in itself, had no law ever been laid down. Such is not the fact: there are indeed many things which we should be bound to do or to abstain from, were there no law on the subject; but there are many others also, which are *morally* right or wrong, in *consequence* of the law. To take an obvious and familiar instance; all systems of laws that have

ever existed have forbidden a man to steal; *i. e.* to appropriate to himself his neighbour's property; but there is nothing to determine what *is* his neighbour's property, except the law of the land. Thus, there have been, and are still, parts of the world in which the soil is not appropriated, except by actual occupation; in them therefore, to take possession of an unoccupied spot of ground would be perfectly allowable; while in other countries it would be no better than robbery. We find Abraham accordingly, and the other Patriarchs, freely pasturing their flocks, and even sowing corn, in the land of Canaan, where they were strangers, without being accused of any encroachment. But Abraham purchased, for money, of the Hittites, a cave for a burying-place, because it was necessary to have *permanent* possession of that, and to exclude others. Water also being scarce in that country, wells seem to have been considered as private property much earlier than land. So also, it is by law only that custom becomes payable upon any kind of merchandise; but when that law is established, the payment of it becomes no less a point of conscience than that

of the purchase-money. "Render," says the Apostle, "unto all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Not that human laws are, as some have contended<sup>b</sup>, the foundation of justice; but only, in some cases, the guide of it. The *authority* of justice is established in our hearts by the Creator; but the *boundaries* of her dominion depend in great degree on positive institutions. We are bound by the law of nature to respect the rights of others, and to "render," as the Apostle bids us, "unto all their *due*;" but it is for human laws to mark out *what* their rights and dues shall be. It is the dictate, in short, of natural justice, that we should conform to established regulations in things originally indifferent; and practise, not only that which is commanded because right, but also that which is right because commanded.

It is perfectly correct therefore to reckon obedience to the laws as one distinct branch of the Christian's duty, since there are some things to which he is bound in consequence of the laws. And he is bound, even in these cases,

<sup>b</sup> Hobbes, &c.

in conscience, not merely in prudence, to conform to these human institutions, as sanctioned by divine authority. In this, therefore, as in every other part of our conduct, as our Maker is our All-seeing and Almighty Judge, let our conscience be a watchful and an uncorrupt witness; and let us act justly, not from the fear of man, but from the love of God.

The laws, however, have a claim not only to *obedience*, and obedience on Christian principles, but also to *support*;—it is not enough, as some seem to suppose, that we should ourselves abstain from infringing them, if we encourage, or connive at, or are indifferent about, the violation of them by others;—if we are so studious of our private ease, and so careless of the public good, as to be content that offenders should remain unpunished, so we may remain unmolested; and would rather the laws should be exposed to contempt, than ourselves to trouble or vexation. How far it is the duty of each individual, under various circumstances, to lend his aid towards the maintenance and enforcement of the laws, could not be explained without a detail which would be unsuitable to this occasion; nor indeed would it be

possible, in the fullest discussion, to lay down rules that should exactly draw the line in every case that might occur. It must be left, after all, to each man's own conscience, to decide as to the kind and degree of support which he ought to give to the laws; only let him remember, that it *is* his conscience he is to consult; not merely his convenience;—that though the magistrate is *especially* bound, he is not *alone* bound, to watch over the observance of the laws; and that since the Apostle tells us we are to consider human institutions as the ordinance of God, those persons show but little reverence for Him, or zeal in his service, and have therefore small claim to his favour, who are careless and unconcerned about the maintenance of those institutions.

I have endeavoured to show, that the laws are entitled, first, to obedience, and, secondly, to support, from the Christian, for conscience' sake. There is another point also in which the conscientious Christian will manifest the influence of the same principle; I mean, in his respect for all the decent solemnities which accompany the administration of justice,—for

the persons, the places, and all the other circumstances connected with it. Tumult and clamour, rudeness and indecorous levity, are not indeed very suitable to any serious occasion of important business; but in a court of justice they assume something of the character of profaneness, in the eyes of one who considers that God himself (who, as the Apostle Paul says, “is not the author of confusion, but of peace”) has given his express sanction to the laws, and calls the dispensers of them his ministers. The Judge is said, according to the law of this land, to represent the King: but the sincere Christian will remember, that both judges and kings are, by virtue of their office, representatives of the Almighty Himself; for whose sake therefore he will honour them, and maintain a decorous, and reverent, and orderly demeanour during the discharge of their functions: especially because other men also, even those who are not of themselves very considerate in their conduct, and are chiefly led by appearances, will generally be the more likely, in practice, to pay a conscientious and scrupulous obedience to the laws, when they see them treated with these outward marks of respect.



These are the intrinsic claims which all systems of law have, in their own nature, upon the Christian : but the institutions of this land seem designed with an express view to maintain somewhat of a religious veneration for the laws, and every thing connected with their administration. The very practice of previously assembling in a place of worship, and listening to a minister of the Gospel, when such business is about to be entered upon, is calculated to cast a tinge of religious solemnity over that business, and to remind us, that whatever relates to the laws, is, in an especial manner, connected with our duty as Christians.

Another circumstance, and the last that I shall mention, as distinguishing and characterizing a good man's obedience to the laws upon Christian principles, is, that he will be guilty of no *perversion* and abuse of them. Since such a man disdains, in his own case, to avail himself of the letter of the law, so as to escape the spirit of it, much less will he, in his dealings with another, take advantage of the letter in opposition to the spirit, and turn the law to a purpose for which it

was not designed, by enforcing his legal rights, when he is conscious that they are not fair and equitable. Much less still, will he convert the law, which was designed for public protection, into an instrument of private revenge and malicious oppression. The very sacred character itself with which the laws are invested, so far from sanctioning such a perversion of them, makes it rather a kind of sacrilege thus to convert God's blessings into a curse. What can such persons expect at their own final judgment, if they are but half as hardly dealt with as they deal with others? And yet they surely *will* be judged, by Him, who has charged us to do as we would be done by, and who has declared, that the measure we give to others shall be measured to us in turn.

And let it be remembered, that even a just and proper prosecution may be sinful in the sight of God, if revenge and malice are the grounds of it. For as I before remarked, that the very same obedience to the laws which would be not at all praiseworthy, if springing from fear of punishment, is acceptable in God's sight, when practised by a sincere Christian for conscience'

sake, so, here also, the very same conduct which would be perfectly right in a man whose *motive* was right, may draw down the heavy displeasure of God, on him who is acting from unchristian feelings. He will be punished, not for what he *does*, but for what he *is*.

But of all abuses of law, the greatest and most pernicious, because to it all the rest may generally be referred, is the setting up of the laws as a system of morality, and making them the guide of our conscience. This error is the more dangerous, because there is so much of Truth incorporated with it. It is certainly true, that we ought to do what the law enjoins; and hence the mistake of supposing that this is sufficient, though we do nothing more. It is true, that we ought not to do what the laws forbid; the error is in reckoning every thing right that is not forbidden by them, and every thing that *is*, as wrong in exact proportion to the punishment they denounce against it.

These mistaken notions are still further fostered by the ambiguous use of the words *lawful* and *unlawful*; which are sometimes employed

with reference to the law of the land, and sometimes to the law of God, and the dictates of a sound conscience ; so that the same thing may be lawful in one sense which is unlawful in another. I have said, that *this* abuse of law is the source of almost all others ; for though profligate men may be found, who will turn the letter of the law to their own advantage, while they are *aware* that their conduct is unjust, the generality of men *satisfy* their own consciences, while they are acting in this manner, by persuading themselves, that since the law is on their side, there can be nothing morally wrong in their conduct.

The error I am now speaking of seems the reverse of that formerly mentioned : the one party do not allow, or do not enough consider, that obedience to the laws is a duty ; the other regard it as their *whole* duty. The one do not feel themselves bound in conscience to conform to established institutions, *as such* ; but profess to be regulated only by what is right or wrong in itself, antecedently to all institutions ; not regarding any thing as right because commanded, or wrong because forbidden : the other look *only*

to what is commanded and forbidden by law, and measure their conduct by no other rule.

These are the two opposite extremes; and yet we sometimes find them united in the same person: for though there are not many who would distinctly *profess either* of these false notions, yet it is not uncommon to see even the same man acting upon both occasionally. At one time, if it suits his convenience to infringe positive regulations, he will plead the law of nature, and urge, *e. g.* that wild animals are the natural property of any one who can seize them; or that all men have a natural right to import whatever goods they please, without making any payment, except to the seller; and that though the law has limited these rights, and guarded the limitation by penalties, yet if he chooses to risk the penalty, he is doing nothing morally wrong: forgetting that whatever property he possesses is his by the law of the land, and by nothing else: and yet at another time, perhaps, the same man, when pressing his legal rights to the most unfair extreme, will justify his hard-dealing, by urging, that he does nothing contrary to law.

It is not my present purpose to shew, by a detail of arguments, that the law, taken as a code of morality, is both an imperfect and an incorrect one, and that we must not allow it to have a decisive voice in the private court of our own conscience; for I am aware that many would think it a waste of proof in defending a self-evident truth. And yet they might be found, in practice, to have their own conduct often perverted by looking to this defective standard. For it is a mistake to suppose that we are safe from the influence of an error, when we have once acknowledged it to be such. Many false notions which we have confuted and condemned in theory, will still be apt to mislead us in conduct. I will refer, therefore, in regard to the nature and the prevalence of this mistaken notion, to the authority of one whose name would deserve to have some weight, even if his arguments on this point were not so clear and convincing as they are, the acute and judicious Dr. Paley.

“Every system of human laws,” says he, “considered as a rule of life, labours under the two following defects: 1st, Human laws omit

many things as not objects of compulsion ; such as piety to God, bounty to the poor, forgiveness of injuries, education of children, gratitude to benefactors. The law never speaks but to command, nor commands but where it can compel ; consequently those duties which by their nature must be voluntary, are left out of the statute-book, as lying beyond the reach of its operation and authority.

“ 2d. Human laws permit, or, which is the same thing, suffer to go unpunished, many crimes, because they are incapable of being defined by any previous description : of which nature are luxury, prodigality, partiality in voting at those elections in which the qualifications of the candidate ought to determine the success, caprice in the disposal of men’s fortunes at their death, disrespect to parents, and a multitude of similar examples.

“ For this is the alternative : either the law must define beforehand, and with precision, the offences which it punishes, or it must be left to the discretion of the magistrate to determine upon each particular accusation, whether it constitute that offence which the law designed to

punish, or not; which is, in effect, leaving to the magistrate to punish or not to punish the individual who is brought before him, at his pleasure; which is just so much tyranny. Where, therefore, as in the instances above-mentioned, the distinction between right and wrong is of too subtile or too secret a nature to be ascertained by any preconcerted language, the law of most countries, especially of free states, rather than commit the liberty of the subject to the discretion of the magistrate, leaves men, in such cases, to themselves."

Thus far Dr. Paley: to which should be added another consideration, which still more unfits the laws for being made a standard of right and wrong. Even in those cases which law can reach and punish, its punishments are measured out, not by the degree of wickedness in the offender, but by the necessity and the difficulty of preventing the offence; prevention being the end of human punishment<sup>c</sup>. Now these distinct principles are so far from always coinciding, that they are sometimes even opposed: *e. g.* the

<sup>c</sup> See Letter on Secondary Punishments. Appendix, No. I.



facility with which an offence may be committed, and the greatness of the temptation to it, are certainly, in a moral point of view, palliations of its enormity; but in the eye of the law they are equivalent to aggravations; for the greater the temptations in any case which allure men to offend, the greater must be the punishment that shall deter them; otherwise the crime would not be prevented. On the other hand, it often happens, that in cases where prevention or ready detection are supposed to be easier, as in breach of trust, and perjury, the punishment is by no means adequate to the depravity of heart in the offender. So erroneous are the judgments we shall form of our own or another's conduct, if we measure it merely by the standard of the law!

But the most important point to be considered is, that human laws look solely or chiefly to the external action, as it affects society; the inward disposition of the heart, which in the sight of God is every thing, being perfectly known by none but Him. Human laws accordingly cannot scrutinize the causes of bad actions, but regard only the effects of them; and consider them not as *sins*, but as *crimes*. The Mosaic Law, therefore,

was in this respect different from all others; from its being given and enforced by the all-seeing God Himself. His law forbids what human laws would in vain forbid, not only to steal our neighbour's goods, but to covet them: his law enjoined what no other law could, to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself."

Yet even this law the Jews, in our Saviour's time, were accused by him of so narrowing to the strict letter of it, as to neglect its spirit; instead of so extending its precepts, and engrafting its principles on their hearts, as to render themselves acceptable in his sight who gave it. "Ye have heard," says He, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and, Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.—Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Surely then we of the

present day, whose national laws are but human institutions, and enforced by human means, but whose rule of life is the example and the precepts of Christ and his followers, enforced by the prospect of eternal happiness or misery, ought still more to be careful that we regulate our hearts by the principles of the Gospel, instead of satisfying our conscience by outward conformity to the law of the land.

Yet there are some Christians, it is to be feared, who, even though they do not make *human* laws their only standard, are too apt to regard the Bible as a system of laws of the same kind: thinking nothing wrong which is not there distinctly forbidden, — nothing a duty, which is not expressly enjoined. Let them look to the blessings pronounced by our Lord, that they may understand better the character of his commandments. He looks to the general tone of conduct, and general disposition of mind: his blessings are upon “the pure in heart,” — upon “the meek,” — upon “the peace-makers,” — upon “them that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” We are taught by the same authority to love one another, — to have our “treasure and our heart in heaven,” — to “set our affection

on things above, not on things on the earth,"—and to copy the example of our great Master. And even where specific precepts are given, it is only for the sake of better illustrating the general principal to be inculcated: no one can suppose that our Lord's commendation of the poor widow who cast in her last mite, or his censure of the Pharisees for choosing out the highest seats at a feast, were designed merely to establish rules in those particular cases, and not rather to enforce generally the importance of a liberal and of an humble disposition<sup>d</sup>.

Since therefore the principles of the Gospel are so plain, as to make it no less unnecessary, than it would have been inconvenient, to enumerate a great multitude of specific precepts, we should strive to impress those principles on our hearts, instead of looking in Scripture for precise and definite rules. We should, in short, judge ourselves by the same standard by which we shall be judged hereafter by Christ himself: and instead of inquiring, in any case, whether we are *strictly bound* to do so and so,—whether there is any *harm*, or any great harm, in this or that,—we should rather ask ourselves, whether we are

<sup>d</sup> See Essay VIII. § 2. Second Series.

living and feeling as becomes the redeemed of Christ, and heirs of immortality. He who is a sincere and faithful servant of Him, will have, through the aid of his Spirit, no difficulty in discovering what his duty is, in any case, because he will inquire for it with candour and singleness of heart ; and he will practise it zealously “ as unto the Lord, and not unto man.” For his sake we should respect indeed and obey human laws ; but without exalting them into a standard of morality, instead of the law of God, which should be within our own breast. For his sake we should regulate indeed our conduct diligently ; but without being satisfied as long as that conduct is unpunishable by men, unless our heart also be pure and blameless before God. And remembering, that though we may live free from the penalty of human laws, and even from the censure of human opinions, we shall yet have to give an account hereafter of those secret actions and thoughts and motives, which no human court can try ; we shall be continually preparing to abide the scrutiny of an unerring Judge at the last day, and to receive at his awful tribunal the sentence of our final doom.

## SERMON III.

NATIONAL BLESSINGS AND JUDGMENTS.

---

DEUT. XXX. 9, 10.

*The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers: if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments.*

THAT right and wrong conduct are likely, on the whole, to lead to good and bad success, respectively, in the present life,—and that the general tendency of each particular virtue and vice is to produce corresponding worldly advantages and disadvantages,—is a doctrine which, in a speculative point of view at least, few would be disposed to controvert. And though this general

rule admits of such numerous exceptions, that a right-minded and considerate man would not venture, in the case of any individual, to infer that his success in life had precisely corresponded with his deserts, or decidedly to promise, *e. g.* prosperity to the honest, frugal, and industrious, and denounce certain ruin to the profligate, yet he would not feel the less convinced of the certainty of the *general* rule, that such conduct will, for the most part, be attended with such consequences.

Nor are States exempt from the influence of the same causes which, in the affairs of individuals, produce these results. National perfidy seldom fails in the end to occasion such a general distrust as must lead to national evils; unprincipled aggression will usually provoke, sooner or later, a formidable retaliation: and, on the other hand, moderation and good faith have manifestly a general tendency to promote peace and internal prosperity.

It is also a point sufficiently acknowledged, that to the Israelites these goods and evils were dispensed *uniformly and regularly*; the Mosaic law being sanctioned by temporal rewards and

punishments,<sup>a</sup> which were of course awarded by an extraordinary and especial providence, according to their obedience or disobedience. But whether this system, which was confessedly peculiar to *them*, so far as it extended to individuals, was also peculiar to them, nationally considered, or not,—whether, in short, States and individuals are both under the same plan of divine government, *viz.* that in both, good and ill conduct lead *generally*, but not *constantly*, to success or misfortune; or whether the two cases are distinguished, and the rule which holds good only *for the most part* in the case of particular persons, is *invariable* in the case of nations,—is a question on which differences of opinion exist. And the discussion of it seems not unsuitable to the present occasion. To dwell on the advantages of the restoration of the kingly government, and on the evils from which it delivered us, might be deemed a superfluous task; but it may be interesting to inquire how far, and in what manner, those advantages and

<sup>a</sup> That these were at least its principal sanction, is admitted even by those who will not allow that the doctrine of future retribution made no part of this revelation.



those evils are to be attributed to the public conduct of our ancestors ; — whether they took place according to the same general rule only, by which temperance and integrity and industry tend, in private life, to promote each man's health and reputation and prosperity ; or, according to some distinct and peculiar system of divine government, which dispenses to nations regular *temporal* retribution.

The inquiry is not unimportant, both because, if the latter doctrine be admitted, (and not otherwise,) it will be allowable, as well as natural, to reason back from political events to national character and conduct ; and regard the Deity as giving, in every instance of public success or calamity, his judgment on the cause at issue : and also, because if this opinion prove to be unfounded, every one who maintains it is so far laid open to the cavils of the irreligious scoffer ; who will thence take occasion to deride the doctrine of divine providence altogether. The question is, moreover, very intimately connected with the right understanding of the Old Testament ; since we cannot be said thoroughly to comprehend the Jewish economy, unless we

know, not only what *belonged* to it, but also what was and what was not *peculiar* to it.

The belief then that temporal rewards and punishments are constantly awarded to nations, according to their conduct and character as communities, is founded, partly, on the supposed necessity of this system, in order that divine justice should be in all cases administered; which, in respect of States, must be, it is urged, in the present world, if at all, since they have no existence in the world to come; and, partly, on those numerous passages of Scripture, especially in the books of Moses, which promise victory and national prosperity to the Israelites, on condition of their obeying God's laws, — denounce defeat and captivity as punishments for disobedience, — and, again, hold out the hope of a restoration of national prosperity, when they shall repent of their transgressions, and return to the Lord their God.

And accordingly, numerous instances are recorded of the fulfilment of these promises and threatenings, both in the case of the *nation* of the Israelites, and of the individuals belonging to it; for this system of temporal rewards and

punishments extended, in a great degree at least, as was above remarked, to each single member of God's chosen people, as well as to that people itself, considered collectively<sup>b</sup>. That this regular distribution of worldly goods and evils to those *individuals* was an *extraordinary* dispensation of Providence, and is not to be looked for in the world at large, is admitted by all. But this, it is alleged, is because there is no longer any need for such an interference of Providence : a future life having been distinctly revealed in the Gospel ; and the rewards and punishments of another world affording a sufficient sanction to its precepts. There is no reason, it is urged, why the same system as that under which the Israelites lived should not be still continued with respect to *nations* ; since for them, there is *no* future state.

This doctrine is supported by the authority of several respectable names ; and, among others, the acute and judicious Leslie seems to have favoured it. “ Now let us consider,” says he, “ that at the day of judgment there is no

<sup>b</sup> See Gen. xxxix. Exod. xx. 12. Numb. xiv. 36. Judges ix. 56. 2 Sam. iii. 28. 1 Kings xiii. 22., &c.

representation of nations ; but every man suffers for his own sin. National judgments are only in this world ; and hence it is observable, that no wicked nation has ever yet escaped a national judgment in this world. Though God may bear long with them, yet if they do not repent, by a national sorrow and amendment, judgment overtakes them, even here. For nowhere else are there any national, either mercies or judgments. And as all nations have been wicked in their several degrees, so have they every one been severally punished, according to their demerits, even before the sons of men."

I. The arguments urged in favour of this opinion have certainly, at first sight, a plausible appearance : and I have endeavoured to set them forth as distinctly and fairly as possible : but they will be found, I apprehend, on an attentive examination, to be less solid than specious.

For, in the first place, when it is urged, that, in order to the vindication of the divine justice, nations must necessarily receive their due meed of reward and punishment in this world, because they will have no existence in the next, it may

be answered, that neither have they any existence now, distinct from the individuals composing them. They are not *moral agents* ; they are not *persons* ; and accordingly they are not capable of reward or punishment. A nation, in short, or any other kind of community, considered as such, and apart from the individuals belonging to it, is a Being which has no distinct existence, except in our minds. It is a notion framed by us for our convenience, in order that we may be enabled to designate with the greater precision a *number* of really existing individuals, who bear a certain relation to each other, when we would speak of them collectively, and with a *view* to that relation.

There is no more common source of confusion of thought, than the tendency to mistake words for things, and to entangle ourselves in a labyrinth formed by the language we employ : nor are men of the greatest ability exempt from the risk of being thus ensnared, whenever they are not carefully on their guard against this particular error. And the case before us is one instance out of many, in which this seems to have taken place : in which, I mean, the notions

framed by our own minds, for the purposes of reasoning and conversing, come at length to be regarded by us as distinct Beings, actually existing independent of our conceptions and expressions.

We are so familiarly accustomed to talk of nations as illustrious or degraded ; as victorious or defeated, prosperous or depressed ;—we so commonly attribute to them, in ordinary discourse, virtue or injustice, happiness or misery, and in short every mode of action and of feeling, that it is not wonderful we should sometimes be insensibly led to forget that they are not persons, but merely conceptions of our own minds ; having no agency, or capacity for suffering or enjoyment, distinct from that of the particular persons of whom they consist.

II. But it may be demanded, how, if nations are thus, as such, unfit objects of reward or punishment, God's dealings with the Jewish nation can be explained. The answer to this would be found, I apprehend, in a careful investigation of the design of the Mosaic dispensation.

It appears to have been part of that design to

exhibit to mankind a sensible specimen, or rather *representation*, by way of proof, of that moral government of God, the system of which is but imperfectly displayed in the world at large; and which is to be completed, and fully realized, only in a future state. It would be inconsistent with the present occasion to enter into a full explanation and defence of this hypothesis: let it be allowed, however, to adopt for the present, the supposition, merely *as a supposition*, that the Mosaic dispensation was, in part, designed for the purpose just mentioned; that we may examine how far the peculiar circumstances of that dispensation correspond with and are explained by it.

1. It would manifestly be necessary then, with a view to the object in question, that the Israelites should be exhibited as *uniformly and regularly* rewarded or punished, according to their obedience or disobedience to the divine commands.

2. And moreover, in order that the correspondence of their situation with their conduct might be more *conspicuously* displayed, it was necessary that they should be *nationally* as well as individually prosperous or unfortunate, in consequence of their good or ill conduct; since the

fate of individuals would have been too *obscure* to engage general attention. 3. It was requisite, for the same reason, that the obedience required of them should not consist in *moral rectitude* alone ; because in that case the correspondence of their circumstances to their behaviour would not have been sufficiently *manifest*. For moral virtue consists, chiefly, in purity of motives, and propriety of inward feelings ; concerning which other men cannot with any certainty form a judgment. It was requisite therefore that their obedience should be tried in the practice of *external* rites, and in a conformity to certain *positive ordinances*. For these observances, though originally matters of indifference, assume a moral character, and become duties, when enjoined by divine authority ; and the obedience or disobedience of a People on such points, is a matter open to general observation, and on which no one would be liable to mistake.

4. Lastly, with the same view, it was no less requisite that the rewards and punishments also, which should be the sanction of such a law, should be of a nature no less palpable and open to general observation ; and should therefore



not consist in any thing inward and invisible, as in peace of mind, and in horrors of conscience ; nor in the hopes and fears of a future state ; but in the immediate and conspicuous distribution of outward worldly prosperity and adversity.

The close correspondence, in all points, of the dispensation actually given, with the foregoing description, is no slight presumption that the object of that dispensation was, in part at least, such as I have supposed, *viz.* to exhibit to mankind, (to those, that is, who should be, in early times, neighbours to the Israelites, or have any intercourse with them, and subsequently to us, and to all others who should read their history, and view their present fate,) to exhibit, I say, a striking picture of God's moral government,—to convince all men of his superintending providence,—and to instruct them in the principles of justice, by which his dealings with them will be regulated.

Nor is it any valid objection to the explanation here offered, to say, that the national blessings and national chastisements sent upon the Israelites, as a people, independent of what was enjoyed or suffered by individuals, could be

no *instance* of the divine administration of *justice*; inasmuch as a *nation*, considered as a nation, is (as has been above remarked) no real personal agent, nor capable of reward or punishment. For though it cannot properly be said to afford an *instance* or *example* of God's moral government, it may nevertheless serve equally well to furnish a *figure and representation* of that government, for our instruction; which is the object we have been supposing designed. Its not being really a distinct *Being*, does not render it the less fit for *that* purpose; since men are able to form a distinct *conception* of it; which is all that is requisite. A sufficient knowledge respecting a country may be obtained from a map; although that consists of paper and ink, and the other of land and water.

In fact, there are, throughout the Mosaic law, innumerable cases in which representations or *figures* are given of the divine justice, which cannot be regarded as themselves instances of it. *E. g.* There are many occasions on which beasts are commanded to be put to death, as if criminal: as, when a beast approached the holy mountain, or occasioned the death of any man:

not that a brute can be supposed a moral agent, and in itself a fit object of divine punishment; but yet the lessons of justice, of reverential piety, and of purity, which were by this means conveyed, were not the less intelligible. The main part indeed of the Jewish ritual consisted of figures, — representations, — types, — of the various parts of that more perfect and final dispensation, whereof we enjoy the reality. A lamb without bodily blemish could have no real and intrinsic merit in the sight of God; but the sacrifice of this, represented the meritorious offering of Christ. In like manner, “the blood of bulls and of goats” had in itself no efficacy in taking away sin; but this was the appointed purification from legal pollution, representing the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice in “taking away the sins of the world,” and procuring pardon and justification for those who have faith in him.

The present occasion will not permit me to dwell on the numberless similar points which might be mentioned, in which “the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ:” but I cannot refrain from observing, that many an

error prevailing among Christians might be cured, if they would but diligently listen to the voice of this schoolmaster, and profit by the lessons which the Old Testament, if rightly understood, is capable of affording.

To instance in the point more immediately under our present consideration, — the representation of God's moral government given in his dealings with the Israelites;—we may observe, in the first place, that though reward was promised to their obedience, as well as punishment denounced against their transgressions, yet they are no where taught to regard this reward as the natural and just consequence of obedience, in the same manner as punishment was of disobedience; or to claim it on any other ground than that of express *promise*<sup>c</sup>. On the contrary, they are studiously and frequently reminded, that it was of God's free mercy, “because He had a favour unto them,” that He had selected them for his peculiar People, and set before them these rewards, on condition of their practising that obedience which He had a full right to demand of them.

Now, considering Christians as standing (which

<sup>c</sup> Essay I. First Series.

they evidently do) in a situation strictly analogous to that of the Israelites, how precisely does this correspond with the scheme of the Gospel, as described by Paul; "The wages," says he, "of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord:" and again, "By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." And how plainly does it confute the notion of those who speak of immortal happiness as the just and natural result of a well-spent life, independent of the promises of God, through Jesus Christ, to those who trust in *his* merits alone.

Again; we are taught in the Old Testament that the nation of the Israelites were arbitrarily chosen out of the world, as the object of God's special favour<sup>d</sup>: but *of them, all* without exception were freely admitted to a participation in this favour, and to the privileges and advantages consequent upon it; the peculiar protection and blessing of the Lord being promised to every one of them, on condition of his conformity to the divine commands; that conformity being all

<sup>d</sup> See Essays on the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul, &c. Essay III. on Election.

along studiously represented as a matter completely in their own power; and consequently the promised rewards as within their reach. Does not this instruct us in what light to view *Gospel election*? The Christian Church stands in the place of the Jewish; it possesses corresponding benefits and privileges; nor can these be reasonably supposed subject to any limitation which did not exist in the other case: the offers and promises of the Gospel, therefore, (since that is confessedly not restricted to any particular nation,) must be regarded as held out to all mankind; except those who have, (for inscrutable reasons) been permitted to remain in *ignorance* of it.

How God will deal with those who never heard of Christianity, it is not for us to inquire; but *all others* must be regarded, if we would be guided by the analogy of the Mosaic dispensation, as standing in a corresponding situation with the Israelites—as being called and *elected* by God out of the world, by the very circumstance of the Gospel's having been preached to them, no less than the Israelites were by his special selection of that nation; and consequently, as

having corresponding offers and promises held out to them, which it rests with each of them to accept or reject at his peril.

But to proceed with the discussion of the point more immediately before us. The view which has been taken of one of the purposes designed to be fulfilled by God's chosen people of old, *viz.* that of affording, by a view of their fate, instruction and admonition to the whole world, is strikingly confirmed by the present state of the Jews. They still exist as a distinct people: they are degraded,—dispersed,—utterly ruined, as a *nation*; and yet there is no reason to suppose that each individual Jew necessarily is, or ought to be, peculiarly miserable, above the individuals of any other nation. But they are a standing evidence of the fulfilment of prophecies; and their situation as a people, serves to represent to each individual Christian, the fearful judgment he will incur if he prove unworthy of the divine favour. Thus is the Jewish nation still employed, without their own concurrence, in fulfilling the office originally assigned them, of furnishing a lesson to mankind.

Now their having been *selected* with this view implies that the system constantly and uniformly pursued with respect to this nation, of temporal retribution, must have been peculiar to them. I say, constantly and uniformly, because since good and ill conduct have a general tendency (as was formerly observed) to produce corresponding results in the present world, it must of course be expected that in very many instances, though not invariably, other nations also should by their crimes bring down merited punishment. And of this several instances are recorded in the Old Testament; as in the judgments sent upon the nations of Canaan, the Amalekites, and the Babylonians. But this was not confined to nations: we also find recorded in the same book several instances of individual tyrants and persecutors among the Gentiles, whose sins were visited by exemplary temporal judgments<sup>e</sup>. But that the regular and *unvarying* administration of this system, both with respect to individuals, and to a nation, was confined to the children of Israel, might be proved even from an

<sup>e</sup> Converse instances may be found also; as that of the Egyptian midwives.



examination of the Old Testament itself, few and scanty as are its incidental notices of the affairs of the Gentiles. And an unbiassed examination of all profane history will lead us to the same conclusion.

III. The study of history, however, *without* this unbiassed mind, may serve even to confirm the theory whose erroneousess I have endeavoured to shew. Those whose minds are pre-disposed towards this opinion will meet with much that seems to favour it. For in political transactions, as well as in those of private life, the *general* rule is, as has been said, that virtuous and vicious conduct tend to produce corresponding temporal results; and this rule cannot but have the appearance of being more uniformly observed in the case of States than in that of individuals, from the circumstance that the former have an indefinite duration of existence; whereas particular persons, from the limited and short duration of the human life, will often escape the operation of those causes which were perhaps progressively leading to their worldly advantage or loss; and the general

system of temporal retribution will thus have been interrupted in its course. Some, *e. g.* who have practised hypocrisy, or whose virtues have been misrepresented, may reach the termination of their lives before their true characters are understood by the world; though it may be plain, that had they lived longer, they would have received ample justice; and others who by their negligence or prodigality have been evidently on the road to distress and discredit, or by their laudable exertions, to affluence and respectability, may be prevented by death, and even by no very premature death, from meeting with those consequences which seemed to await them. Whereas in the case of States, while the evils or advantages which spring from the conduct of one generation may often be suffered or enjoyed by another, yet the same single object,—the nation,—will appear receiving its due reward or punishment.

So various too are the transactions in which every nation is involved, and the events which befall it, during a long course of years, that public success or calamity may almost always be traced up, with a show of plausibility, to some

public virtue or crime, either recent or remote, by those who are inclined to such a theory. And this is the more easy, because it is in many cases so doubtful what it is that is properly to be called the nation, — whether the existing government, or the legitimate government, or the majority of the people, — that a man may often represent the same event either as a blessing or a calamity to the nation, according as may suit the purpose of his argument. The event, *e. g.* which we are this day commemorating, those who were attached to our constitution in Church and State, of course, regarded, as a great blessing; while by the puritans or republicans, on the other hand, it was considered as a national calamity; and these again rejoiced in the subversion of the regal government, which we commemorate as a heavy judgment; and, as is well known, boasted of their success as an evident declaration of the Deity in favour of their cause.

But a candid and impartial appeal to experience will lead us, I apprehend, to the same result as the foregoing reasonings, *viz.* that in political as well as in private transactions, the

system of God's moral government is, to make good and bad conduct lead, for the most part, but not invariably, except in the case of the Jews, to temporal success or disaster. The notion that it is requisite for the vindication of the divine justice to expect a distribution of national reward and punishment distinct from what is enjoyed or suffered by individuals, I have endeavoured to refute as fanciful, and as growing out of men's tendency to mistake the conceptions of their own minds for real Beings possessing an independent existence. And I have endeavoured to shew likewise that the confirmation which this notion has been supposed to derive from the sacred writings is founded on a mistaken view of the nature and design of the Mosaic dispensation.

If the view which I have taken of this subject be correct, it need not be apprehended that the profit to be derived from the contemplation of the events recorded in history will be thereby diminished. On the contrary, all human affairs, both public and private, being under the guidance and control of an all-wise Providence, which has

appointed that the general tendency of good and bad conduct shall be to produce temporal advantages and evils, but which has also permitted many exceptions to the general rule,—ordaining among the trials of this present world the occasional prosperity of the wicked and affliction of the righteous,—we shall be enabled, by taking a *right* view of the existing constitution of the world, to receive the moral lessons it is calculated to afford, without being dismayed at the chastenings with which the good are visited, or misled as to the justice of any cause by the success of its adherents;—without being puffed up with national pride on account of the advantages we have obtained,—and without judging rashly and uncharitably of those whose present lot has been less fortunate;—and lastly, without incurring the triumphant scoffs of infidels, by maintaining an untenable notion of divine Providence.

If then our judgment is guided by right principles, we may derive useful religious and moral instruction from the contemplation of human affairs; and more especially of such political events as history records: not that these are

under any different system of divine government; but because, from their being more conspicuous and better known, we are enabled to take a wider and more comprehensive survey of them. And of these, such as are, like the event we this day commemorate, remote from the times in which we live, may in this point of view be the most useful to us; because we are more likely to take an unprejudiced, dispassionate, and just view of them, than of those recent transactions in which we have a more immediate personal interest.

Many profitable lessons may be drawn from a view of the event now before us; but none more evident or more valuable than this: that extreme violence in any cause generally and naturally tends to produce such a violent reaction as ultimately defeats the proposed object. The deposition and murder of the King may be traced, in great measure, to intemperate violence in the support of the royal prerogative: similar violence in the opposers of the encroachments of sovereign power led to the establishment of a usurping sovereign, and, subsequently, to the restoration of the royal family: and finally, the inconsiderate

eagerness with which the restored king was welcomed, without due precautions being taken for securing public liberty, led to a series of fresh encroachments, which ended in the final expulsion of that family.

It is our own fault if we fail to learn from this, that the truest friend to liberty is the supporter of regular and moderate government; and that the firmest bulwark of royal authority is the judicious advocate of the subject's rights.

By adhering to such principles, and keeping clear of the violence of opposite parties, we shall be taking the best means within our reach to prevent the recurrence of such national calamities as revolution and civil war. But whatever may be the events which it may please God in his unsearchable wisdom to bring about in this world, we have his assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love him;" and that in the next life, if not in this, the day of retribution will come, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, and "reward every man according unto his works."

## APPENDIX.

---

I WAS induced, in 1831, by the peculiar aspect of the times, to republish the above discourse, in a separate form, and to append to it some further considerations illustrative of the application of its principles. These remarks are here subjoined, in the same form in which they were then published.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the present time, when so much alarm prevails in respect of an apprehended pestilence, it is likely that such as entertain opinions opposite to those of the preceding discourse, will take occasion to set them forth the more strongly, and to represent a national judgment as about to be sent, by a special interposition of Providence, to punish the sins of the people, or of their governors.

It is undoubtedly as judicious, as it is a pious course, to avail ourselves of such an occasion as the present, for impressing on men's minds the much-neglected considerations of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the importance of preparing for another world during



the period of youth and health. The apathy with which these things are usually contemplated, is only an instance of the disregard which is the proverbial offspring of familiarity; and accordingly, the awfulness of the idea of death, is augmented beyond all proportion, when it is presented in any unusual form. It is useful, therefore, to take advantage of the impression thus produced, to induce men to think seriously of their eternal interests.

And it is very profitable also, to contrast the alarm, the anxiety, and the sedulous caution, which are usually called forth by the expected inroads of a bodily disease, with the carelessness too commonly manifested in respect of what is incalculably more important,—those disorders of the soul which concern our condition for ever in the next world.

But it does appear to me a dangerous, as well as an unwarranted procedure, to represent all cases of disease, defeat, famine, or other temporal affliction, as instances of divine vengeance, for the sins, either of the sufferers themselves, or of their fellow-citizens; and to lead men to suppose that worldly prosperity and adversity are allotted regularly, and in exact proportion, either to individuals or to nations, as signs of the divine favour and disfavour. In respect of nations, the argument from the supposed necessity of apportioning rewards and punishments to them in this world, on account of their having no existence in the next, has been fully treated of in the foregoing Discourse; in which I have endeavoured to clear away that confusion of thought, which results from the careless employment of figurative language.

But I would further suggest, that the argument is as unsafe in practice, as it is in itself unsound. If we

presume to represent, as altogether *necessary* to the vindication of the divine justice, a certain course of dispensations, which yet experience shews does not uniformly take place, at least, (to take the lowest ground,) which we cannot satisfactorily *prove* to have uniformly taken place, we are going so far towards shaking men's confidence in the divine providence; and they may even be led to suspect that the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the next world, is as untrue, or as doubtful, as they will have found, or appeared to find, that of the regular apportionment of temporal prosperity and adversity.

Whole nations of the unfortunate South-American Indians were consigned to bitter slavery—were massacred—were hunted down like wild beasts, and most of them finally extirpated by the Spaniards, who took possession of the treasures, and of the fertile lands of these poor wretches, and have since multiplied into a great people. Now, whether it be true or not, few will be induced to believe, that these unhappy Indians, ignorant though they were of true religion, were especial objects of divine displeasure, compared with their Spanish oppressors, who achieved such victories over them.

The same may be said of the unhappy Africans, as compared with the slave-dealers; who, for generation after generation, carried on (as some still do) a gainful trade, by tearing these poor creatures from their country, crowding them on board unwholesome slave-ships, where multitudes of them were swept off by infectious diseases, and finally consigning them and their posterity to bondage.

It is true that the Philistines, the Babylonians, and other Pagan nations, were often employed as a scourge

to punish the backslidings of God's peculiar people, when those nations themselves were, perhaps, equally or more wicked, except for the circumstance that they did not sin against the light of revelation. But such cases are the very reverse of those just mentioned; *viz.* the infliction of the most horrible cruelty and injustice *by* those who were called to be God's people, by professed Christians, on such as had *not* received the light of revelation, and were comparatively inoffensive.

If again, any one studies the accounts of the Vaudois, one of the most interesting nations on the earth, when he sees the members of a pure and apostolical church enduring for successive generations every species of calamity, (which they might have escaped by apostasy,) subjected to rapine, imprisonment, exile, slaughter, and every refinement of cruelty, all which they endured with unflinching fortitude, for the truth's sake, always ready to return good for evil to their persecutors, he will hardly be brought to think that these men could be (compared with their Romanist neighbours, who escaped these afflictions) peculiarly the objects of divine displeasure.

These, and many similar instances, which history can supply, must lead men either to doubt the reality of a divine Providence, or to conclude that such a view of it as I have adverted to, is erroneous. But if men adopt that view, there is this further danger: that if they escape visitations of disease, and other temporal afflictions, they will be likely to exult uncharitably over those who suffer them, and to regard their own exemption (by parity of reasoning) as a proof of their being acceptable in God's sight. If, for instance, this Country should escape (as it

has for the last 160 years) the attacks of pestilence, to which other nations have been exposed, there is surely reason to fear, that the principle I have been speaking of, may lead us to a dangerous self-conceit;—to a belief, that so long an exemption is a sign of our having surpassed in morality, to a much greater degree than we have, the rest of the world.

If, again, the apprehended calamity should fall on us, there is a danger of another kind to be apprehended, from the inculcation of the doctrine that a *whole people* are subjected to such a visitation for the sins of a *part*;—that divine vengeance falls indiscriminately on the most, and on the least guilty, as a punishment for the wickedness of the generality. For under such a persuasion, each man's natural self-partiality will be apt to lead him to look to the sins of his neighbours, or of his rulers, rather than to his own, as calling down the divine vengeance. And many may thus be led to think it meritorious to cut off those "who trouble our Israel:" even as the covenanters did in the time of the civil war; who began by confessing, with apparent humility, the national sins, and proceeded next to depose and put to death their rulers, whose criminality they thought exposed themselves to judgments from heaven. Such a procedure seems perfectly consistent with such a principle. Among the Israelites, such a dispensation *was* established; and a corresponding procedure was, naturally and rightly, founded on it. Divine judgments were sent on the people, including the innocent, for such violations of the divine law by individuals, as could be distinctly ascertained; and every one, accordingly, was authorized and called on, to avert the divine wrath by "executing

judgment" on those individuals. When a plague raged among the Israelites, on account of the corrupting intercourse of some of them with the Moabites, Phinehas, without any special commission, "arose and executed judgment, and so the plague ceased." When, again, their army was defeated through the transgression of Achan, he was, consistently and rightly, put to death. When they were afflicted with famine, "for Saul and his bloody house," seven men of his family were put to death, and "the Lord was intreated for the land." These, and numberless similar instances, were cited as precedents, and acted on by the covenanters; with perfect fairness, supposing we are under a like dispensation. Let us at least consider to what our principles, if consistently followed up, will lead us.

No doubt all the dispensations of Providence, whether adverse or prosperous, are sent for some wise and good purpose. Sickness, and other afflictions, may serve as a profitable *chastisement*, by awakening a sinner from his careless and irreligious state, and checking his devotedness to the present life and its enjoyments. Health and prosperity, again, may serve as a useful moral discipline, no less than their contraries; but CHASTISEMENT is a very different purpose from retribution. The allotment of good and evil, according to the character of each man, (which is properly retribution) is reserved, under the christian dispensation, for the next world. Before the Gospel was revealed, the Israelites were *regularly*, and other nations *occasionally*, punished by temporal inflictions, proportioned to their transgressions; but the Apostle Paul points out, as one of the *characteristics* of the Gospel, that in it God has "commanded all men

everywhere to repent, inasmuch as He has APPOINTED A DAY in which He will judge the world in righteousness."

The novelty and peculiarity of this announcement consisted, not in declaring the Deity to be the *judge* of the world, (for this the Jews knew, and most of the Pagans believed) but in declaring that He had appointed a *day for that judgment*, before Christ's tribunal in the *next* world. Men were thenceforth to look for a retribution, not, as before, *irregular* and *uncertain*, but prepared for *all* men, according to the character of each;—not, as before, immediate, in the present life, but in the life to come.

Let Christians then be exhorted, conformably to the Apostle's doctrine, habitually to turn their thoughts to that GREAT DAY; and to wean their affection from "the things on the earth, and set them on things above." It is true that some men, who are nearly strangers to such a habit, may be, for a time, more alarmed by the denunciation of immediate temporal judgments for their sins, than by any considerations relative to "the things which are not seen, and which are eternal." But the effect thus produced is much less likely to be lasting, or to be salutary. In the first place, if they *escape* the pestilence, or other visitation with which they have been threatened, there is danger of their relapsing irretrievably into carelessness, if not into disbelief, or contempt of a religion, whose denunciations (as they will have been taught to apprehend) of temporal judgment, they will have seen not regularly fulfilled.

And besides this, such an alarm, while it lasts, is not calculated to produce the most salutary effects, because it

does not tend to make men spiritually-minded : and any reformation of manners it may have produced, will not have been founded on Christian principles. He who is temperate, for the sake of avoiding sickness,—honest and industrious for fear of discredit and poverty, &c., will indeed be the more likely to attain the temporal objects he aims at ; but is not the more acceptable in the sight of God, if he is acting on no higher motive than the goods and evils of the present world can supply. “ Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.”

Now since the general tendency of mankind is towards an over devotion to the good things of this world, (which, after all, are not promised to the Christian) while there is a comparative carelessness about the things which “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” in the next world ; every effort should be made, by each Christian, and by each Christian Pastor, to counteract this tendency. We should carefully impress on our own minds, and those of our hearers, that to look for temporal retribution, is inconsistent with the profession of a religion, whose Founder was persecuted and crucified, and whose first preachers were exposed to “ hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness,” and every kind of hardship, and were “ made the offscouring of all things ;” so that they declared that “ if in *this life* only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men most miserable.” We should consider, too, that these very sufferings proved a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews ; not merely from their being unwilling to expose themselves to the like, according to the forewarnings of Jesus, “ in this world ye

shall have tribulation," &c.; but still more, from their regarding these sufferings *as a mark of divine displeasure*, and consequently a proof that Jesus could not have come from God. Because He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," they "did esteem Him stricken, SMITTEN OF GOD, and afflicted," and "they hid their face from Him."

And it should be remembered, that the *Jews*, who had been brought up under a dispensation sanctioned by temporal rewards and punishments, were less inexcusable in this their error, than those *Christians*, who presume to measure the divine favour and disfavour by temporal events.

Let not men be taught, then, that those who are exposed to the ravages of disease, are more the objects of divine wrath than the rest of mankind; any more than those Galilæans whom Pilate massacred, "were sinners above all the Galilæans," but let them be told, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish:" *all*, that is, who persist in sin will be infallibly judged in the next world, whatever may be their lot in this. Those again, who are striving to lead a Christian life, are not to be taught that they are therefore to expect exemption from worldly afflictions, from painful disease, or untimely death; but they should be taught, that "all things work together for good" (that is, spiritual and eternal good) "to them that love God:" that if they strive to make a right use of all the painful trials that may be sent on them, their "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and that they ought not to be disheartened by their temporal sufferings, as if these were a mark of divine displeasure,



but to look to the example of the Lord Jesus, and "rejoice in him always."

"But you will say, that a man cannot be cheerful with the fear of death before his eyes; that it will weigh upon his spirits, in spite of all he can do to shake it off. Fear, indeed, is hard to be reasoned with, and the fear of death is hardest of all; but though it may not be reasoned with, it can be prayed against. True it is, that the chance of taking the cholera *is* a very fearful thing, if we are not fit to die: the prospect of a sudden and painful disease carrying us off in twenty-four hours, *is* a very terrible one, if death is without hope to us. But what, if fear be taken usefully, and make us set about obtaining that which will make us justly bold? What, if the thought of this new disorder, which kills those whom it does kill, in so very short a time, should lead us to think seriously of death, and why it is that we fear it? What, if it should make us see clearly what is the sting of Death, and labour and pray earnestly to be delivered from it? What, if it should lead us to seek the Lord while he may be found; to turn to him in all sincerity, who died and rose again for us, that we might not fear to die, because our hope is to rise as he is risen? Truly, if the fear of the cholera leads us to seek this only real way of not being afraid of it, it will be, both to our bodies and our souls, not so much a curse as a blessing<sup>a</sup>."

In truth, there is no temporal good or ill that may not become either a blessing or a curse, according to the use made of it; so that we know not rightly what (of these

<sup>a</sup> These words are taken from an excellent little tract On Cholera, circulated by Dr. Arnold, at Rugby.

things) we ought to pray for, or to pray against. We should therefore never pray *absolutely* and *unconditionally* for any thing, but what we are *sure* is good for us: *viz.* for God's grace to enable us to bear both prosperity and affliction with a Christian mind, and "so to pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal." When we offer up any prayer for life and health, plenty, peace, and worldly comfort, or for deliverance from worldly afflictions, we should always add, in words, or mentally, with devout resignation to Providence, "not my will, but thine be done;" we should beg to be blessed with as much, and *only* as much, of worldly advantages, as the All-wise shall see will not prove a snare to us, by fixing our heart too much on the earth: we should beg Him to spare us no temporal affliction, that he sees to be for our real and eternal benefit; and we should "commend to his fatherly goodness all those" (whether ourselves or others) "who are any way afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; that it may please Him to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and" (either in this life or the next) "a happy issue out of all their afflictions."

## SERMON IV.

USE OF HUMAN LEARNING IN MATTERS OF  
RELIGION.

---

1 COR. ii. 4.

*My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

CERTAINLY the Gospel did not owe its propagation to human eloquence or wisdom, any more than to the influence of human power and worldly splendour. The deficiency of temporal advantages in its first preachers, compared with the magnitude of the object they effected, might of itself have led us to conjecture, even had there been no record of the miraculous pouring

out of spiritual gifts upon them, that they must have been favoured with some supernatural and extraordinary aids. And the choice of such instruments, supported by such aids, is exactly suitable to the character of a divine dispensation, and what we might reasonably have expected to find in it. Had the great and the wealthy, the learned and the eloquent, been employed in the work, there never could have been the same complete certainty that the religion came from God. Hence it is that, as Paul says, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

This point we find him anxiously and repeatedly impressing on the Corinthians, to guard them against either undervaluing his doctrine, or mistaking its character. It is probable that they in common with the Greeks in general, or perhaps in a still greater degree,

were disposed to set a very high value on the devices of human ingenuity, rhetoric and philosophy ; or, as our translators have rendered it, “the enticing words of man’s wisdom ;” (the word σοφία, which in general approaches near to the signification of our word “philosophy,” being that which is here translated “wisdom ;”) and since the very appearance of relying at all on such aids would have been a degradation of the Gospel, and would have tended to weaken the evidence of its truth, the Apostle seems to have been especially careful at Corinth, to give the fullest manifestations that God, and not man, was the author of what he announced. It appears that he therefore sought to humble the pride of human reason, by foregoing the use even of such human advantages as he possessed ; suppressing his learning,—putting aside his eloquence,—and in short laying bare as it were the divine agency which was at work, by stripping off the needless equipment of human arts and accomplishments. For on what did he rest for his success ? On means alone, amply sufficient, and peculiarly appropriate to a divine messenger—the power of working miracles. To

this display, — this demonstration, as he calls it, “of the Spirit and of power,” (*ἀποδείξεις πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως*), he repeatedly and confidently appeals, in this, as well as in other Epistles, in attestation both of the reality and the nature of his mission. He does not indeed so much distinctly *assert* his own miraculous powers, (which would not have been at all natural, in speaking to men who were themselves eyewitnesses of them,) but obliquely *alludes* and refers to them, incidentally, as something perfectly notorious and familiar to his readers. The word *δυνάμις*, which in the present text is rendered “power,” and which, when employed in some other places (plurally) is translated “mighty deeds,” and “miracles,” has undoubtedly been rightly understood by our translators to signify *miraculous* power; that, together with *τεράτα* and *σημεία*, (wonders and signs,) being, as Dr. Paley has justly remarked, “the specific appropriate terms throughout the New Testament, employed when public sensible miracles are intended to be expressed.” Of this any one may convince himself by consulting the numerous passages in which these words occur.

I. There was good reason then that the Apostle, possessing these miraculous gifts of the Spirit, and even empowered to impart them to others, should not only be ready boldly to trust for the success of his ministry to such testimony, but should even renounce and studiously depreciate all his human advantages and attainments, in his intercourse with those who were apparently inclined to overrate the worth of philosophical subtlety, and oratorical skill. Such is the description he gives in the Epistle before us, of his own preaching at Corinth: "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing amongst you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

These considerations suggest a question of great practical importance, which cannot be too

often or too earnestly pressed upon your consideration; *viz.* What should be the expectations, and what the conduct, of Christians of the present day in all that relates to spiritual influence, both in the whole course of their lives, and more especially in the attaining and communicating of religious instruction?

Paul's example cannot mislead those who really copy him. We are not only *authorized*, but commanded, to be "followers of him as he is of Jesus Christ," provided we are but careful to imitate him fairly and exactly in accommodating ourselves, as he did, to the circumstances of each case. For we shall in fact be most widely departing from his example, if we take the same steps with him in a widely different situation. The aid indeed of Him, who promised to be with His Church "always, even unto the end of the world," is as indispensably needed, and as confidently to be hoped for, by us of the present day, as by the primitive Christians: but to pretend to such a measure, or such a species of spiritual influence as we have no warrant to expect, would be most dangerous presumption. The tendency to this error, which may be found,



in various degrees, in many sincere Christians, is the more deserving of careful consideration, not only from the vast importance of the doctrine which they thus expose to censure, contempt, and ridicule, but also on account of the sympathy and tenderness due from every true follower of Christ, to those who in sincerity acknowledge the authority of his religion over their hearts<sup>a</sup>.

II. We hear it then not unfrequently urged, that we have now the same Gospel as was preached by St. Paul; and that we ought to learn and teach it in the same plain, simple, and unstudied manner that he did, without attempting to set off the dignity of divine truth by any contrivances of human ingenuity;—that it rests on its own intrinsic excellence, and on the spiritual support of its Author, disdaining all assistance from human learning, eloquence, or philosophy;—that, like David in Saul's armour, it is rather encumbered than fortified by the aids of profane learning, and of artificial systems of morals, dialectics, and rhetoric;—that without

<sup>a</sup> See Essay IX. Second Series.

the divine aid, all our laborious studies will be utterly fruitless, and that *with* that aid, every thing will become perfectly simple and easy to the spiritually-minded;—and that they will be the means of enlightening such others as are, like them, spiritually-minded; while all the rest will be incapable of being brought, by any art or erudition in their teachers, to understand “spiritual things.” In a word, they have continually in their mouths the expressions of Paul, which they apply to their own case, *viz.* that they are “determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified;” and that they disdain to employ “enticing words of man’s wisdom.”

Nothing undoubtedly can be more just than the renunciation of all reliance upon human means, as of themselves sufficient:—the preference of moral to intellectual qualifications;—of candour and sincere piety, to learning and acuteness;—and the caution not to exalt human reason to a level with divine revelation, nor to submit the mysteries of God to be judged by philosophical rules devised by arrogant and short-sighted man. So far, no fault is to be found with the sentiments of the persons in

question. But if they push their principles further, to the exclusion or neglect of learning and intellectual culture, while they look for spiritual assistance to compensate for that neglect, they are not merely indulging in a wild and fanciful interpretation of Scripture,—they are not merely foregoing an important advantage towards the attainment and the communication of religious truth,—but they are guilty, it is to be feared, of no less an offence than that of presumptuously tempting Providence.

The persons selected for the first propagation of the Gospel were such, for the most part, as could have had no opportunities of intellectual culture. The reasons for this selection are those which have been above mentioned: in order that it might appear to be the work of God, it was necessary that his power should be the more fully manifested by the weakness of the instruments employed. And it was necessary for the accomplishment of the scheme which divine wisdom had proposed, that the extraordinary spiritual aids bestowed on them should be such as to qualify them, not only for understanding and teaching Christianity, but also for

giving evidence of its divine origin ;—should be, in short, decidedly and perceptibly *miraculous*.

It might have been antecedently conjectured that these extraordinary gifts would cease with the occasion for them ;—that when sufficient miraculous evidence had once been given, and the Christian Church once established, nature would be restored to her ordinary course ;—that reference would be made to the past miracles, as affording sufficient evidence to a candid and well-disposed mind ;—and that Christians would be left, under the ordinary and more secret guidance of the Holy Spirit, to employ their diligence and exert their faculties in teaching, and propagating, and defending their faith<sup>b</sup>.

Such a procedure appears precisely analogous to the former dealings of God with the Jewish Church. The Mosaic law was delivered to the

<sup>b</sup> It is probable, that, as miraculous powers seem to have been generally at least *conferred* only by the imposition of hands by the *Apostles*, when these were all departed, and those who had received gifts from *them* had followed them, miraculous powers became thus gradually extinct by the drying up of the channels which had supplied them.—See Hinds' "Rise and Progress," Vol. I. p. 227. See also Acts viii. 14. and Rom. i.

Israelites, as on this day<sup>c</sup>, from amidst the miraculous fires of Mount Sinai: “The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak unto thee, and believe thee for ever<sup>d</sup>.” The supernatural manifestation of the divine power was required for the first establishment of these institutions; but the Israelites were afterwards left to teach these institutions, themselves, to their children. This church and nation indeed being under a theocracy—under the guardianship of an extraordinary providence in their temporal concerns,—were allowed to make an immediate reference to the will of their divine Ruler, and to consult him on individual points where the Law did not of itself instruct them how to act. But even this aid was gradually withdrawn; and they were left more and more to be guided by their own reason, and by the diligent study of their Scriptures.

The same was the case with that later and more glorious dispensation, of which the delivery of the Law from Mount Sinai was doubtless a

<sup>c</sup> Whitsunday.<sup>d</sup> Exod. xix. 9.

type,—the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost,—the very festival which commemorated that delivery of the Mosaic law.

The gift of tongues was not only a necessary means for enabling the Apostles rapidly to propagate Christianity over extensive and distant regions, but that, together with the other supernatural powers bestowed on them, served to attest the reality of their divine mission<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> An attempt to refute the pretensions of those who have lately claimed the gift of an unknown tongue, would be, to those who are so infatuated as to give credit to them, a hopeless task; and to all others, superfluous. This case stands almost, if not entirely single, in the history of religious delusions. For, a belief in former counterfeit miracles was only groundless, but not *self-contradictory*. Those who have pretended to the gifts of healing—of raising the dead, &c. always gave out that the sick *were* cured, and the dead raised. Whereas the pretence of speaking in a miraculous tongue (*i. e.* language) which no one can *understand*—the very distinction of a language from an unmeaning noise, such as the gurgling of a stream, or the gabble of an idiot, being, its conveying some sense to *somebody*—this is analogous to a man's professing to heal the sick when he acknowledged they remained *unhealed*, or to raise a dead corpse to life, though it remained lifeless.

But though the *absurdity* of a belief in such pretensions is

Whatever may be thought of the foregoing reasoning, the fact is undeniable, that all perceptibly miraculous powers at least, have long since been withdrawn. The question then is, Are we to expect any other such supernatural assistance as may dispense with the necessity for our own exertions in the cultivation of our faculties, and the acquisition of that knowledge and skill which we should be naturally led to employ in any worldly pursuit? We know that when we propose to evangelize any foreign nation, it is absolutely necessary to acquire, by the ordinary modes of study, such a knowledge of their language as the Apostles obtained by inspiration: if we would gain an insight into futurity, it must be by the study of history,—by the exercise of our natural sagacity,—and by reference to the prophecies of Scripture: if we would heal the sick, we must resort to human

generally admitted, the *sin* of it is often overlooked. To follow on insufficient grounds those who pretend to a divine mission, is to give to another the reverence due to the “jealous God” and to his true messengers. And we know what heavy judgments were denounced and inflicted on those misled by the false prophets, who said “the Lord hath spoken; when the Lord had *not* sent them.”

means of affording relief; still hoping for the divine blessing on our endeavours. Are we then authorized to profess a contempt for human learning, on the ground that the Apostle Paul “determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified?” Are we to despise all studied arts of composition, because *he* needed not the “enticing words of man’s wisdom,” being possessed of the “demonstration of the Spirit and of power?” Such a procedure is in fact a wide departure from the example of Paul: for he did employ the most powerful means that were within his reach. He dispensed with the advantages of human learning and human eloquence, because he was favoured with immediate revelations from the Most High, and with the words of inspiration, and with the acts of miraculous power. Those then who pretend thus literally to conform to the example of Paul, may fairly be challenged to produce similar proofs of the same qualifications; to attest, like him, their claims to inspiration, by performing sensible miracles; and if they fail of thus establishing their pretensions, let them beware lest they stand convicted of the most groundless and



arrogant presumption. They are acting as an Israelite would have done, who should have disdained to till the ground in the land of Canaan, and looked for a continuation of the miraculous supply of manna. In that wilderness, which was naturally barren, and which, had it been fertile, the Israelites could not have cultivated, on account of the perpetual wanderings to which they were sentenced, the supernatural supply of manna was most fitly bestowed, both for the relief of their present wants, and for the display of God's power and fatherly superintendence. The attempt to raise corn in that wilderness, would, at that time, have been not only ineffectual and unnecessary, but would also have indicated a foolish and impious doubt of God's promises. But when they arrived in the promised land, they were left to cultivate the ordinary fruits of the earth in the ordinary manner: though with a distinct warning that they were still under the same divine government, and that an obedience to God's commands would be necessary to bring his blessing upon their labours.

Surely there cannot be a more striking illustration of what is expected of Christians at the

present day. If they indulge their own indolence and caprice, in the neglect of human means, and tempt God's providence by expecting that miraculous assistance which is no longer either required or promised, they will be left to reap the fruits of their presumptuous folly: if they exert themselves in cultivating, what are called their natural faculties, but which in fact are as truly divine gifts as those bestowed on the Apostles,—if they labour with diligence and prudence to acquire such knowledge and skill as may tend to their own benefit and that of their fellow-creatures, both in spiritual and temporal concerns,—and if they are careful to sanctify these their faculties and exertions, by doing “all for the glory of God,” and by humbly relying on his protection, they may hope that the secret influence of his Spirit will guide, and support, and prosper their endeavours.

Whether the error I have been speaking of arises originally from indolence, and from distaste, either for study in general, or for any particular branches of it, or whether it is to be traced to a hasty and careless interpretation of the Apostle's language, or is the offspring of

enthusiasm and spiritual pride, or of these causes conjointly, there is no error that is more likely to damp or to misdirect the exertions, and to defeat the object, both of the hearer and the teacher of religion.

III. If this mistake be but sufficiently exposed and guarded against, a well-disposed and sincere Christian (that is, *every* Christian who can entertain any just hopes of salvation through Christ) will need rather to be reminded than exhorted to employ his best faculties, and to use his most diligent and zealous endeavours, in learning, and teaching, and practising the duties of his religion. If engaged in, or destined for the ministry, he will feel ashamed to labour less earnestly or less carefully in that high and sacred calling, than the most active members of secular professions in theirs. Or if he is not engaged in what is called the profession of the Church, he will recollect that he is still a *member* of the Church,—though not a Minister of Christianity, yet a Christian;—by his baptism admitted to the privileges, and bound to the duties, that that name implies. He will remember that the Ministers of religion can do nothing for those

who will do nothing for themselves ; and that a matter in which he has individually so much at stake is not to be neglected, merely because he is not professionally employed in it. He will feel that the peculiar worldly occupation of any man sinks at once into insignificance, if compared with the great business of providing for his eternal welfare ; and that religion, which is the common concern of all, is the most important concern of each. With due dread, in short, of our Lord's solemn warning, that " the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," he will take care to make the most of the time that is allotted him for " providing himself an everlasting habitation ;" lest the patient toil and skilful diligence of the worldly-wise, in pursuing the perishable goods of this life, should rise up against him in the day of judgment and condemn him, for being careless and slothful in a concern of so much greater moment,—for having not put forth all his strength, in the race of which the prize is " a crown incorruptible."

Let the Christian then who would manifest his zeal in the service of his Redeemer, and who

has a just sense of the littleness of all worldly goods in comparison of “the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” not renounce or neglect such human advantages as he possesses, or has the means of acquiring; but dedicate them to the service of God. All his faculties, and all his studies, however worthless they may be when employed for any other purpose, — however debased and polluted, when devoted to the service of sin, become ennobled and sanctified, when directed by a pious mind towards a good object. The land of Canaan had been defiled by the wickedness of its first inhabitants; but it became the *Holy Land*, when bestowed upon God’s peculiar people. They were not commanded, after extirpating the Canaanites, to let it lie waste, as incurably polluted by their abominations; but to cultivate it, and dwell in it; living in obedience to the divine laws, and dedicating its choicest fruits to the Lord their God.

On the Christian Church the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, granted at her first establishment; — the manna, as it were, miraculously showered from heaven upon her, during her

first wanderings in the wilderness,—is no longer bestowed: but she need not therefore be apprehensive of want; she is still under the same divine protection. A land flowing with milk and honey is before us; a land which has been cultivated indeed by the profane, and whose best gifts have been abused by the ungodly; but which is capable of being sanctified by a dedication to the service of God. That land is the field of ancient and modern literature,—of philosophy in almost all its departments,—of the arts of reasoning and persuasion. Let us not “think scorn of that pleasant land.” Every part of it may be cultivated with advantage; for every part of it will produce fruits fit for an offering at the tabernacle of the Most High.

It would be needless to enter here into any detailed disquisition upon the utility of the studies pursued in this place, and on the connexion which exists, or rather which may be established, between them and religious improvement. The subject has been frequently, and fully, and ably discussed by others. But it is necessary frequently to recall to our attention,

first the necessity of diligently pursuing those studies, instead of expecting extraordinary inspiration to compensate for our neglect; and secondly, of not supposing that there is any intrinsic efficacy or holiness in those studies, if we are not careful to pursue them with a proper frame of mind, and to bring them to bear on their proper object.

With respect then to the former of these points, let it be remembered, that if we would truly imitate the example of Paul, we must in many respects reverse his practice, in conformity to our reversed situation; endeavouring by such human means as are within our reach, to supply the want of those miraculous gifts which he enjoyed. Since we have not, like him, the gift of tongues, we must diligently apply to the study of such languages as we have need of. Our want of the divine revelations which he enjoyed, we must supply, as far as we are able, by the attentive study of the Scriptures, and of such works as may serve to illustrate them. Instead of determining to "know nothing but Christ," we must explore the treasures of ancient and modern philosophy, and range through all

the regions of nature and of art, in search of whatever knowledge may conduce to the proving, explaining, and enforcing of the great truths of Christianity. And instead of disdaining to employ “enticing words of man’s wisdom,” we should studiously avail ourselves of every honest expedient that human ingenuity has devised, — of all the fair rules of art that experience has suggested to judicious men, for explaining and establishing what is true, and for enticing men by persuasion to what is right. These studies and these arts have had great influence in matters unconnected with religion ; which is so far from being a reason why they should not be employed in its service, that it should rather make us the more eager to devote them to a holy purpose, trusting to the divine blessing to prosper our endeavours.

I will conclude by briefly suggesting some cautions, which, in pursuing such a course, should ever be kept before us.

2d. Our next care, after the dedication of our faculties and of our studies to religious uses, must be, to keep all other pursuits in due *subordination* to that which is incalculably the most



dignified and the most important of all. Not only must we be careful not to pride ourselves on human learning and eloquence, and to set too high a value on such accomplishments, for their own sake; but still more anxiously must we guard against the error of trying the mysteries of religion by the rules of philosophy;—of boldly measuring the decrees of divine wisdom by the imperfect standard of human reason,—receiving or rejecting what revelation presents to us, according as it is agreeable or repugnant to our preconceived notions,—and explaining away, or modifying, the scriptural doctrines, into a conformity with our own presumptuous speculations. In this point we must strictly conform to the practice of Paul, of “comparing spiritual things with spiritual;” and of remembering, that “the natural man receiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

3d. Another caution must be, to apply practically to our own hearts, and exemplify in our conduct, whatever we learn, and whatever we teach, respecting religion. We must never

forget that the utmost proficiency in theological knowledge will be not only useless, but pernicious to the student who does not at the same time labour to become spiritually-minded, and to “bring forth the *fruits* of the Spirit.” For he who is not careful thus to apply to himself personally, and reduce to practice, what he learns, will only become the more hopelessly irreligious; because he will, through long familiarity, have hardened himself against religious impressions. To use the words of the acute and judicious Bishop Butler, “going over the theory of virtue in one’s thoughts,—talking well,—and drawing fine pictures of it,—this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to the habit of it, in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and form a habit of insensibility to all moral obligations. For from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker, and thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly.” It is evident that all this will apply no less both to the learner and to the teacher of *religion*. The most judicious explanations,—the most persuasive

eloquence,—even such as have produced edification to the sincere and attentive hearer, may be utterly lost on the insincere, or undevout, or negligent author of them: “after having preached to others,” he may “himself become a castaway.”

The tendency just mentioned is one against which the preacher must be on his guard, not only in himself, but in his hearers. I mean, that he must not too hastily conclude that he is an edifying preacher in the same degree in which he is a *popular* one; nor measure the proficiency of his congregation by the applause they bestow on him, or by the delight they take in hearing him. Eloquence amuses the fancy;—learning and ingenuity excite admiration,—even in those who are neither receiving, nor seeking to receive, any profitable religious impression;—who are sitting in judgment, not on their own hearts and conduct, but on the speaker’s abilities. And his talents and eloquence will even prove the more attractive, and afford the more unmixed gratification, to the generality of men, if they do *not* find themselves awakened to an anxious care for their own salvation,—to

earnest self-examination and repentance. These thoughts are not acceptable to “the natural man :” and therefore the preacher who is gladly listened to and eagerly applauded by great multitudes, should, instead of at once congratulating himself on the efficiency of his ministry, again and again anxiously examine both his doctrines, and his mode of conveying them. He should not absolutely conclude indeed, but suspect, that he has been either dwelling too little on some of those essential points of the Gospel-scheme which are the least agreeable to the corrupt nature of man, or at least not so enforcing them as to induce each of his hearers seriously to make the application to himself. And if he find that some alteration is called for in his style of preaching, and on adopting it, is mortified to find, that, (as was the case with his great Master,) “many of his disciples go back, and walk no more with him,” let him remember that it is better to edify a few, than to please a multitude ;—that his business is to seek the salvation of his hearers, not their present gratification ;—and that whatever he may by this means lose of “the praise of men,”

will be far more than made up to him in “the praise of God.”

4th. Lastly, we must never forget to apply for, and to rely on, that aid of the Holy Spirit which is still promised, and still needed, to give efficacy to such human means as we may employ. The error of trusting in our own unaided strength, and neglecting to implore the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit, to stimulate, and sustain, and prosper our exertions, is at least as great and as dangerous as the opposite error, of looking for miraculous assistance, and pretending to infallible inspiration. We are still as dependent on divine assistance as the Apostles; though the measure, and the kind of it, bestowed on them, were different, in conformity to their different situation. When the supply of “bread from heaven” to the Israelites had ceased, they were carefully warned not to consider themselves as therefore no longer dependent on the Lord their God; but to look up to Him as the bestower of the natural fruits of the earth. “When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land

which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, . . . . lest when thou hast eaten and art full, . . . . and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, . . . . and all that thou hast is multiplied ; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, . . . . who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end ; and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God : for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.”

We ought then, remembering the promise of Jesus Christ himself, that as a father gives bread to his children, so will our heavenly Father “give good things to them that ask Him ;”—we ought, I say, habitually and earnestly to make application for divine assistance : not expecting indeed that it should supersede, but that it should encourage and prosper our exertions. The husbandman must labour in tilling his ground, or he cannot expect a harvest ; but

without the sunshine and the rain from heaven, his labour will be all in vain. "Work out," says the Apostle, "your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

And while we assiduously implore the support and direction of the Holy Spirit, without which "we can do no good thing," we should beware not to defeat our own petitions;—not to "grieve the Holy Spirit," by refusing to be "led by Him." If the Christians are to be, as St. Paul says, "a temple of the Holy Ghost," each Christian must be careful to keep it pure and holy for the reception of such a guest; undefiled by any vicious thought, word, or deed; for "if any man," says the same Apostle, "defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

We must not indeed, in the present day, expect any distinct consciousness of spiritual agency; much less, boast of our experiences, and pretend to direct inspiration, when we are unable to produce the attestation of sensible miracles: but we may recognize the agency of the Holy Spirit by his fruits. If we study

St. Paul's description, we need not be at a loss to ascertain what are "the fruits of the Spirit:" and aware of our own natural helplessness, we must always attribute to Him, with humble and devout gratitude, all our proficiency in Christian virtue, and all success that may attend our efforts: for He is the "God from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed."

In what manner indeed it will please Him to prosper our honest endeavours, in answer to our supplications for divine grace, we cannot be certain; but we *may* be certain, that such endeavours and such supplications will not be in vain. It may happen that the most pious, and zealous, and diligent, may preach without effect to the hardened and the careless: but he will not therefore lose his own reward, from the hands of the just and all-seeing God. On the other hand, it is possible that much edification may be produced by the learning and the eloquence of one who does not supplicate for divine assistance, and is not seeking the glory of God in simplicity and singleness of heart; but is led by vanity, avarice, or ambition, to labour for the



display of his own talents, or the promotion of his worldly views. It pleased God that, in the first age of Christianity, the cause of truth should be furthered by some such unworthy instruments; there were some, as we learn from Paul, who “preached Christ even of envy and strife.” Only let it be remembered, that he whose heart is not sanctified by the influence of the Holy Spirit, will reap no benefit himself from the services he may perform to others; and that he who *is* thus sanctified, and who zealously and sincerely labours for the salvation of his brethren, will at least not fail, through God’s mercy, to secure his own.

## SERMON V.

CHRIST THE ONLY PRIEST UNDER THE GOSPEL.

---

HEB. vii. 24—27.

*This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

THIS day is set aside to commemorate two remarkable deliverances from the superstition

and tyranny of the Romish Church;—from the compulsory establishment of what we regard as one of the worst corruptions of our religion.

It will not therefore be either unsuitable or unprofitable to fix our minds on the importance of these deliverances, by considering some of the errors from which we thus escaped; especially such of them as even Protestants of the present day require occasionally to be warned against.

There have indeed been differences of opinion with respect to the transactions in question themselves. One of them has by some been represented as altogether a fabrication; and with regard to the measures pursued in the other, much diversity of sentiment has prevailed. But it is perhaps better in general (as was remarked in a former discourse<sup>a</sup>) to leave discussions of this nature to historical and political writers, to whose province they more especially belong; the preacher confining himself to his own, more appropriate, office, of deducing from the established and generally-admitted accounts

<sup>a</sup> Sermon I. p. 284.

of any transaction, such useful conclusions as have an immediate reference to religious knowledge or practice.

For the same reason it is perhaps better to waive the discussion of another question also, of great importance indeed, and closely allied to all disquisitions respecting the Romish Church, but which is rather of a political than a theological character; I mean, that concerning the laws which affect Roman Catholics. I would not be understood to insinuate that men are not to be regulated in their political conduct by religious principles. But it is notorious that conscientious Christians frequently differ widely on important questions, which cannot be referred to the decision of Scripture without taking for granted some part of the point in dispute. If indeed there be, on the one hand, any who think it right to employ coercion for the suppression of religious errors, they must be told, that they “know not what manner of spirit they are of;” and must be taught from Scripture, that Christ’s “kingdom is not of this world,” and that they have no right to “judge another’s servant:” or if, on the other hand, there be any who look

with indifference on all religions, or who regard the errors of Romanism as of little moment, it is the preacher's duty to convince them, if possible, of their mistake. But where both parties admit, as the most respectable portion of each are ready to admit, on the one hand, the excellence of our Church, and the mischief of the Romish errors, and on the other, the impropriety of imposing any restrictions, except what may be necessary for our own protection, the remaining point in dispute, *viz.* Whether it be safe or not to relax the existing laws respecting Roman Catholics, is a *political* question; and one too, whose complexion must vary according to political conjunctures. And such a question is better discussed any where else than in the pulpit.

Only let the Minister of Christ beseech both parties, for His sake to lay aside all bitterness of animosity, and abstain from branding each other too hastily, as persecuting bigots, or as lukewarm latitudinarians; nor rashly attribute to their opponents motives or objects which they disavow.

The points at issue, however, between our

Church and that of Rome, *are* proper subjects of theological discussion; and on one of them I propose on the present occasion to offer a few observations; *viz.* the abuses introduced by that Church into the institution of the Christian Priesthood, and their mistakes as to the nature of it; which have tended in a considerable degree to alter the whole character of the religion of Christ, and have led the way to a train of most pernicious errors, doctrinal and practical.

I. That the English word PRIEST is frequently employed for the rendering of two different words in Greek, *viz.* ἱερεὺς and Πρεσβύτερος, (from the latter of which our “Presbyter” or “Priest” is derived,) is a circumstance of which no scholar can be ignorant indeed, but which is not in general sufficiently attended to: for it is not the same thing to be merely *acquainted* with the ambiguity of a word, and to be practically aware of it, and watchful of the consequences connected with it. And it is, I conceive, of no small importance that this ambiguity should be carefully and frequently explained to those who are ignorant of the original language of the Old Testament.

Our own name for the Ministers of our own religion, we naturally apply to the *Ministers* (in whatever sense) of any other religion; but the two words which have thus come to be translated “Priest,” seem by no means to be used synonymously<sup>b</sup>. The Priests, both of the Jews and of Pagan nations<sup>c</sup>, constantly bear, in the sacred writers, the title of Ἱερεὺς; which title they never apply to any of the Christian Ministers ordained by the Apostles. These are called Ἐπίσκοποι, (literally Superintendants; whence our English word “Bishop;”) Πρεσβύτεροι, literally Elders, and so rendered by our translators, probably to avoid the ambiguity just alluded to; though the very word “Presbyter” or “Priest,” is but a corruption of that name: and Διακόνου, literally “Ministers,” from which our word Deacon is but slightly altered.

The titles, from their original vague and general signification, became gradually not only restricted in great measure to Christian Ministers, but also more precisely distinguished from each other than at first they had been; so as to

<sup>b</sup> Elements of Logic, B. iv. chap. 4. § 2.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xiv. 13.

be appropriated respectively to the different orders of those Ministers, instead of being applied indiscriminately.

But no mention is made, by the sacred writers, of any such office being established by the Apostles, as that of "Priest" in the other sense, *viz.* Ἱερεὺς;—Priest, in short, such as we find mentioned, under that name, in Scripture.

Now this alone would surely be a strong presumption that they regarded the two offices as essentially distinct; for they must have been perfectly familiar with the *name*; and had they intended to institute the same *office*, or one very similar to it, we cannot but suppose they would have employed that name. The mere circumstance that the Christian religion is very *different* from all others, would, of itself, have been no reason against this; for the difference is infinite between the divinely-instituted religion of the Jews, and the idolatrous superstitions of the heathen; and yet, from similarity of office, the word Ἱερεὺς is applied by the sacred writers to the Ministers of both religions.

The difference of names, then, is, in such a



case as this, a matter of no trifling importance, but would, even of itself, lead us to infer a difference of *things*, and to conclude that the Apostles regarded their religion as having no Priest at all, (in the sense of *Ἱερεὺς*,) except Christ Jesus; of whom indeed all the Levitical Priests were but types.

It is next to be considered what was the nature of that office which was exercised by the Jewish and by the Pagan Priests; and which, according to the Apostle, belonged, after the establishment of Christ's kingdom, to Him alone.

The Priests of the Israelites were appointed by the Almighty himself, for the express purpose of offering *sacrifices*, in the name and on the behalf of the people; they alone were allowed to make oblations and burn incense before the Lord: it was through them that the people were to approach Him, that their service might be acceptable. A very great portion of the Jewish religion consisted in the performance of certain ceremonial rites, most of which could only be duly performed by the Priests, or through their mediation and assistance; they were to make

*intercession* and *atonement* for offenders; they, in short, were the *mediators* between God and man.

It is true the Israelites were a sacred *nation*, and are called in Scripture a “kingdom of Priests;” but it is plain that this is not to be understood as admitting them all indiscriminately to the exercise of the sacred offices just mentioned; since the most tremendous punishments were denounced (of whose infliction examples are recorded) against any who, not being of the seed of Aaron, presumed to take upon them to burn incense and make oblations.

But it was requisite to impress on the minds of the Israelites that they were not to entertain the notion (which appears to have been not uncommon among the heathen) that religion was the exclusive concern of the Priests: they, on the contrary, were required to worship God themselves,—to conform to his ordinances,—to keep themselves pure from all defilement, moral or ceremonial,—and to practise all their duties out of reverence to God, their Lawgiver and King; they were, in short, to be Priests in piety of heart and holiness of life. And in the same

sense Peter calls Christians “a royal Priesthood;” and John, in the Apocalypse, speaks of them as “Kings and Priests;” evidently meaning that they were dedicated to Christ, and were bound to offer up themselves as “a living sacrifice” devoted to Him. Whenever accordingly the title of Priest is applied at all to any of Christ’s followers, it is applied, not to any particular order of men among them, but to all Christians. They are, all without exception called figuratively Kings and Priests: but they are (as Christians) Kings without subjects, and Priests without a people; in reference merely to the exalted state of glory to which they are called, and to their oblation of *themselves*,—their souls and bodies, to God’s service. We are told to present ourselves a “lively” (i. e. *living*) “sacrifice,” in contradistinction to the victims *slain* at the Altar; and this is called our “reasonable” (i. e. *rational*) “service,” as contrasted with the offering up of *Brute*-beasts, under the old Dispensation. But the true and proper Priest under the gospel-dispensation, is, the “one Mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus.”

There may have been another intention also

in calling the Israelites (as well as the Christians afterwards) a kingdom of Priests; *viz.* to point out that the mysteries of their religion (which among the Pagans were in general kept secret among the Priests, or some select number, whom these admitted to the knowledge of them) were revealed, as far as they were revealed at all, to the *whole* of this favoured nation. Many parts indeed of the Mosaic institutions were but imperfectly understood by any, as to their object and signification; but nothing seems to have been imparted to the Priests which was withheld from the people. This very striking distinction is remarked by Josephus, who observes, that such religious mysteries as, among the heathen, were concealed by the Priests, were imparted to the whole Jewish nation.

That there was, however, a distinct order of Priests, properly so called, set apart for a peculiar purpose, is undeniable and undisputed.

Among the Pagans, whose institutions appear to have been, in great measure, corrupt imitations of those of the patriarchal religion, we find, as before, Priests, who were principally, if not exclusively, the offerers of sacrifices, in

behalf of the State and of individuals,—intercessors,—supplicating and making atonement for others,—mediators between man and the object of his worship.

This peculiarity of office was even carried to the length of an abuse: (I speak now of the abuses introduced into the *institutions* of the Pagans, in contradistinction to the absurdities of their *faith*;) there seems to have been, as has been already hinted, a strong tendency to regard all religion as exclusively the concern of the Priests;—that they were to be the sole depositaries of the mysteries of things sacred;—that a high degree of holiness of life and devotion were required of them alone;—that they were to be religious, as it were, instead of the people;—and that men had only to shew due respect to the Priests, and leave to them the service of the Deity; just as they commit the defence of the State to soldiers, and the cure of their diseases to physicians. Against such notions (as was before remarked) the Israelites were studiously cautioned; and not without reason; since they are but too common in the present day, when they are still more groundless and unreasonable.

The office of Priest, then, in that sense of the word which we are now considering, *viz.* as equivalent to ἱερεὺς, being such as has been described, it follows that, in *our* religion, the *only* Priest, in that sense, is Jesus Christ Himself; to whom consequently, and to whom alone, under the Gospel, the title is applied by the inspired writers. He alone has offered up an atoning *sacrifice* for us, even the sacrifice of his own blood; He “ever liveth to make *intercession* for us;” He is the “one *Mediator* between God and man;” “through Him we have access to the Father;” and “no man cometh unto the Father but by Him.”

II. As for the Ministers whom He, and his apostles, and their successors, appointed, they are completely distinct from Priests in the former sense, in office, as well as in name. Of this office one principal part is, that it belongs to them (not exclusively indeed, but principally and especially) to preach the Gospel,—to instruct, exhort, admonish, and spiritually govern, Christ’s flock. His command was, to “go and teach all nations;”—to “preach the Gospel to every creature:” and these Christian Ministers

are called in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “those that bear rule over them, and watch for their souls, as they that must give an account.” Now it is worthy of remark, that the office we are at present speaking of made no part of the especial duties of a Priest, in the other sense, such as those of the Jews, and of the Pagans. Among the former, it was not so much the family of Aaron, as the whole tribe of Levi, that seem to have been set aside for the purpose of *teaching* the Law: and even to these it was so far from being in any degree confined, that persons of any tribe might teach publicly in the synagogues on the Sabbath day; as was done by our Lord Himself, who was of the tribe of Judah; and Paul, of the tribe of Benjamin; without any objection being raised. Whereas an intrusion into the Priest’s office would have been vehemently resented.

And as for the Pagan Priests, *their* business was rather to conceal, than to explain, the mysteries of their religion;—to keep the people in darkness, than to enlighten them. Accordingly, the moral improvement of the people, among the ancients, seems to have been

considered as the proper care of the legislator ; whose laws and systems of public education generally had this object in view. To these, and to the public disputations of philosophers, but by no means to the Priests of their religion, they appear to have looked for instruction in their duty.

That the Christian Ministry, on the contrary, were appointed, in great measure, if not principally, for the express purpose of giving religious instruction and admonition, is clearly proved both by the practice of the apostles themselves, and by Paul's directions to Timothy and to Titus.

Another, and that a peculiar and exclusive office of the Christian Ministers, is, the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. But this administration does not at all assimilate the Christian Priesthood to the Pagan or the Jewish. The former of these rites is, in the first place, an admission into the visible Church ; and therefore very suitably received at the hands of those whose especial business is to *instruct* and examine those who are candidates for Baptism, as adults, or



who have been baptized in their infancy ; and in the second place, it is an admission to a participation in the gifts of the Spirit, which constitute the Church, “the Temple<sup>d</sup> of the Holy Ghost.” The treasury, as it were, of divine grace is then thrown open, to which we may resort when a sufficient maturity of years enables us to understand our wants, and we are inclined to apply for their relief. It is not, let it be observed, through the mediation of an earthly Priest that we are admitted to offer our supplications before God’s mercy-seat ; we are authorized, by virtue of this sacred rite, to appear, as it were, in his presence, ourselves ; needing no intercessor with the Father, but his Son Jesus Christ, both God and man. “Having therefore,” says Paul, “*boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full

<sup>d</sup> See Hinds’ “Three Temples.” It ought to be kept in mind that it is only to Christians *collectively*,—that is to the Church, that this term is applied. Individual Christians are called “living stones,” but never, temples.

*assurance* of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, again, is not, as the Romanists unwarrantably pretend, a fresh sacrifice, but manifestly a celebration of the one already made. And the rite seems plainly to have been ordained for the express purpose (among others) of fixing our minds on the great and single oblation of Himself, made by the only High Priest, once for all ;—that great High Priest who has no earthly successor. And *all* the communicants are alike partakers, spiritually, of the body and blood of Christ, (*i. e.* of his Spirit,<sup>e</sup> of which these are the emblems) provided *they themselves* are in a sanctified and right frame of mind. It is on the personal holiness of the communicant, not of the Minister, that the efficacy of this Sacrament depends ; *he*, so far from offering any sacrifice himself, refers them to the sacrifice already made by another.

Such being then the respective offices of these

<sup>e</sup> “ It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; (*i. e.* giveth life) the flesh profiteth nothing,” &c. John vi. 63. See note on the Eucharist. Essays. Second Series. Appendix II.

two orders of men, (both now commonly called in English “ Priests,” but originally distinguished by the names of Ἱερεὺς and Πρεσβύτερος,) we may assert, that the word in question is *ambiguous*; denoting, when thus applied to both, two things, essentially distinct. It is not merely a comprehensive term, embracing two species under one class, but rather an equivocal term, applied, in different senses, to two things of different classes. At least it must be admitted, that what is most essential to each respectively, is wanting in the other. The essential characteristic of the Jewish Priests, was, (not their being *Ministers* of religion; for that, in a certain sense, all the Levites were; but) their offering *sacrifices*, and making atonement and intercession for the people: whereas of the Christian Minister the especial office is religious instruction, and the administration of rites totally different in their nature from the offering of sacrifices;—totally precluding the idea of *his* making himself the mediator between God and man.

The confounding together, then, through the ambiguity of language, two things thus essen-

tially distinct, may well be expected to mislead, not only such as are ignorant of the distinction, but all who do not carefully attend to it, and keep it steadily in view.

III. I propose, in conclusion, to point out a few of the errors which have thus arisen.

1st. In the first place, the enemies of our faith, craftily endeavouring to confound in all points our religion with the various systems of superstition that have deluded mankind, have gained great advantage over the unwary by the ambiguity in question. They have designated all religions that have ever prevailed as so many systems of imposture, devised by Priests for the purpose of establishing their own influence, by keeping the people in ignorant subjection.

That this description by no means fairly applies to the religion of Moses, has already been remarked; but when it is applied to Christianity, it can only be by taking advantage of the casual ambiguity of a word, to confound a distinction, which it implies the grossest ignorance to overlook, or the grossest dishonesty to suppress.

The following passage from a discussion, in a

well-known periodical work, (professedly respecting the religion of the Hindoos, but whose author is, evidently, and with scarcely even a pretence of concealment, directing his attack against every religion, except Deism,) may serve as a specimen of the ingenious misrepresentation which has been employed on this topic. The writer evidently possesses no common talents;—his whole dissertation is elaborate, and skilfully composed;—there is much reason (though not unmixed with error) in what he says of the Bramins and of the Romish Priests;—and it requires no small degree of caution and of patience to apply the test which shall decompose, as it were, his sophistry,—shall precipitate the falsehood from the truth with which it is combined,—and exhibit his poison in its genuine and malignant form. “The Priest,” he says, “must always have an interest in rendering religion not, as rational as possible, but the reverse. . . . The advantage of the Priest consists in his being able to persuade the rest of his fellow-creatures that *they* do not understand the will of the Supreme Being, but that *he* does. . . . But nothing is more simple than to know what

is the will of a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness. . . . But if, on the other hand, the Priests can persuade the people that the will of God is something very unaccountable, . . . . subject to the influence of all manner of weak and wicked passions, with unbounded power for their gratification, . . . it is very easy in that case for the Priests to frighten the people with an idea that they cannot know the will of God, and that infinite evil may fall upon them in consequence ; but that the Priest does know it ; and that they therefore can do nothing better than throw themselves upon the Priest, and follow implicitly his directions. . . . The Priests in consequence become a species of intercessors. If a man has offended the Deity, they alone can interfere to mollify him. Their prayers only are of any value : and they invent a system of sacrifices, and other rites, for the same purpose," &c. &c.

It would occupy too much space to cite passages, as might easily be done, from the same article, which prove that the author intends to apply, the greater part, at least, of this and similar descriptions, to our religion, as well as to

that of the Hindoo idolaters. That his account of the origin of priestcraft, even among them, is not altogether correct, but is, in some measure, the reverse of the actual course of things, I shall have occasion briefly to point out hereafter. But the application of this character to Christianity is a sophism which no man of acuteness could employ, who was not either wilfully misleading others, or himself blinded by the obstinate prejudice of a corrupt heart. If we are but careful to keep in view the two meanings of the word "Priest,"—the broad distinction between ἱερεὺς and Πρεσβύτερος,—we shall run no risk of being either seduced or silenced by all the idle clamours that are afloat about priestcraft. Our readiest and shortest answer will be, that Christianity (I mean Christianity as found in Scripture, not as perverted by man's devices) has no priestcraft, for this simple reason, that it has (in that sense of the word in which our opponents employ it) *no Priest on earth*. And it is worthy of remark how striking a *peculiarity* this is in our religion; there being probably no religion in the world, certainly none that has ever prevailed among the more celebrated

nations, which has not Priests in the same sense in which the Levitical Priests and those of the ancient Greeks and Romans are so called. Now every peculiarity of our religion is worth noticing, with a view to the confirmation of our faith, even though it may not at first sight strike us as a distinguishing *excellence*: for that our religion should differ from all others, in points in which they all agree, is a presumption at least that it is not drawn from the same origin.

The distinction I have been speaking of is no slight verbal difference, but real and essential. The priesthood of Pagan nations, and that of our own, are not merely *unlike*, but, in the most essential points, even *opposite*. *They* offer sacrifices for the people; *we* refer them to a sacrifice made by another: *they* profess to be the mediators through whom the Deity is to be addressed; *we* teach them to look to a heavenly Mediator, and in His name boldly to approach God's mercy-seat themselves: *they* study to conceal the mysteries of religion; *we* labour to make them known: *they* have, for the most part, hidden sacred books, which none but a chosen few may look into; *we* teach and exhort men to



study the word of God themselves: *they* strive to keep the people in darkness, and to stifle inquiry; *we* make it our business to enlighten them; urging them to “search the Scriptures,”—to “prove all things—and to hold fast that which is right:” *they* practise the duties of their religion *instead* of the people; *we* instruct and admonish all to practise them for themselves. And it may be added, that *they* in general teach, that a devoted confidence in them and obedience to their commands, will serve as a substitute for a moral life; while *we* declare to them from Scripture, that it is in vain to call Jesus Lord, if they “do not the things which He says.”

Now if the Jews be justly condemned, who crucified our Lord between two thieves, thus studiously “numbering with the transgressors” of the vilest kind, the only man who never transgressed, it is awful to think what account those will have to render at the last day, who labour to vilify this religion, by confounding it with the grossest systems of human imposture and superstition, in those very points in which the two are not only different, but absolutely *contrasted*.

In fact the contrast in this point, between the Christian religion on the one hand, and all that exist or ever existed besides it, (including the Jewish) on the other, will afford, if we rightly consider when, and by whom, our faith was introduced, one of the most powerful evidences of its truth.

The Apostles, though attentive to the regular government of the Churches they founded, ordaining, for various services, Elders, and other Ministers, male and female, (the latter being known by the title of “Widows<sup>†</sup>”) yet appointed no order of Priests in the sense of ἱερεὺς, (familiar as they must have been with the name) answering to the sacrificing priests of the Jewish and of the Pagan religions. The same observations will apply to the Temple. The term was familiar to the New Testament writers; but it is never once applied by them to a Christian place of worship; always to the worshippers themselves, collectively;—to the Christian congregation: as *e. g.* “Know ye not that ye are the Temple of the Holy Ghost which

<sup>†</sup> It appears from the Fathers that many who held this office, and title, were virgins.

dwelleth in you?" "Your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost." "Ye, as lively (*i. e.* living,) stones, are builded together [or edified] into an holy Temple," &c.

All this is indeed perfectly intelligible to any one who understands the character of our religion. It is perfectly consistent with the Gospel-scheme; but it is utterly at variance with the notions which would naturally have occurred to the unassisted mind of man.

A further proof of this, if further could be needed, is furnished by the changes which were introduced in after-ages. The very institution which Christianity in its pure state had abrogated, was grafted into it, as it became corrupted with human devices. An order of Priests in the ancient sense, offering pretended sacrifices on a pretended altar, in behalf of the people, was introduced into the Christian scheme, in such utter contradiction both to the spirit and the very letter of it, that they were driven to declare the bread and wine of the Eucharist miraculously changed into literal flesh and blood offered up day by day repeatedly: although the founders of our religion had not only proclaimed

the perfection of the one oblation of our Lord by Himself, but had even proved the imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices, from the very circumstance of their being repeated “year by year continually;” inasmuch as “they would have *ceased*” (says the Apostle) “to be offered,” if, like the sacrifice of Christ, “once for all,” they could “have made the comers thereunto perfect.” Now if, when the religion *had* actually been established *without Altar,—without Sacrifice,—without Priest on earth*, all these were introduced into it, in opposition to its manifest character, through the strong craving (if I may so speak) of “the natural man” after them, how much more might we expect—with what complete certainty—that men brought up *Jews*, and having never *seen or heard of* any religion, true or false, without Priests, would have instituted, had they been left to themselves, an Order of sacrificing priests in their new religion? And how certain, that, since they carefully abstained from this, and provided against it in the terms they employed,—how certain that they were *not* left to themselves, but proceeded under the guidance of a divine director!

2d. The corruptions then subsequently introduced into Christian Churches, in respect of the Priesthood, do in reality, by shewing what the tendency of *human nature* is, go to prove the *superhuman* origin of the original institution. These have however afforded ground for cavil against Christianity itself, to those who, ignorantly or designedly, confound the religion itself with this perversion of it.

The Greek and Romish and some other Churches have in fact, in some great degree, transformed the Πρεσβύτερος,—the Priest of the Gospel dispensation,—into the Ἱερεὺς, or Levitical Priest: thus derogating from the honour of the one great High Priest, and altering some of the most characteristic features of His religion, into something more like Judaism or Paganism than Christianity.

To enter into the detail of this perversion, would lead to a discussion not only too long for the present occasion, but which in fact must have been forestalled by any one who is at all acquainted with the abuses formerly prevailing among us, and who has dwelt on such considerations as those which have been now laid before you.

Before the reformation of our Church the Priest professed, like the Jewish, to offer sacrifice (the sacrifice of the mass) to propitiate God towards himself and his congregation: the efficacy of that sacrifice was made to depend on sincerity and rectitude of intention, not in the communicants themselves, but in the Priest; he, assuming the character of a mediator and intercessor, prayed, not *with*, but *for* the people, in a tongue unknown to them, and in an inaudible voice; the whole style and character of the service being evidently far different from what the Apostle must have intended, in commanding us to “pray for one another.” The Priest undertook to reconcile transgressors with the Almighty, by prescribing penances, to be performed by them, in order to obtain *his* absolution; and, profanely copying our only High Priest, pretended to transfer to them his own merits, or those of the saints. He, like a Pagan, rather than a Jewish, Priest, kept hidden from the people the volume of their faith, that they might with ignorant reverence submit to the dominion of error, instead of being “made free by the truth,” which he was expressly

commissioned to make known; thus hiding the “candle under a bushel,” which was designed to “be a light to lighten the nations.”

In short, whoever will minutely examine, with this view, the errors of our unreformed Church, will find that a very large and important portion of them may be comprehended under this one general censure, that they destroyed the true character of the Christian Priesthood; substituting for it, in great measure, what cannot be called a Priesthood, except in a different sense of the word. These errors, in short, go far towards changing the office of *Πρεσβύτερος* into that of *Ἱερεὺς*.—Against any Church, therefore, in proportion as this abuse prevails in it, the charge of Priestcraft may but too justly be brought.

For our escape from these errors, by the Reformation, and for all the merciful dispensations of Providence by which that great work was brought about, and its benefits secured to us, we are bound to be at all times devoutly grateful to the Father of mercies, and especially on this anniversary.

3d. We must not, however, flatter ourselves

that as long as we are out of the pale of that corrupt Church, and keep clear of the *name* of Roman Catholic superstition, we are necessarily free from all danger of falling into the same errors, in some other shape. It is a great mistake to suppose that the system sanctioned by the Church of Rome was the *cause* of the errors and abuses which have prevailed in it: it is not the cause, but rather the *result* of them. They were not originally devised by crafty and worldly men, but are the natural growth of the corrupt soil of the human heart. These were only taken advantage of, as they arose, and gradually consolidated into a system, by an ambitious and designing hierarchy. The seeds of the same errors are lurking in the hearts of Protestants, and are ever ready to spring up, under new names.

In no point perhaps are dangers of this kind more cautiously to be guarded against than in the one now before us. In all ages and countries, mankind have ever shewn a tendency to attempt the performance of various duties, but especially, their religious duties, *by proxy*<sup>g</sup>.

<sup>g</sup> See Errors of Romanism, Ch. ii.



Man, except when unusually depraved, retains enough of the image of his Maker, to have a natural reverence for religion, and a desire that God should be worshipped; but through the corruption of his nature, his heart is (except when unusually purified) too much alienated from God to take delight in serving him. Hence, the disposition men have ever shewn, to substitute the devotion of the Priest for their own;—to leave the duties of piety in his hands,—and to let him serve God *in their stead*. This disposition is not so much the *consequence*, as itself the origin of priestcraft. It is easy to deceive those who are thus craving after deception.

It may be added, that it is to the same source we may trace the disposition so universally met with, to substitute the due performance of rites and ceremonies, (whether of divine or of human appointment,) for true piety and the practice of virtue. Priests have, in this case also, not so much directed as followed the stream of men's inclinations. To be religious without virtue,—to gain the divine favour by doing any thing else, however painful or absurd, rather than their

duty,—has always appeared to be a favourite object with unregenerate man. And one who believes that there is a spiritual Tempter of the human heart, cannot but expect that this should be the case. Priests could not so universally have persuaded men into such absurdities, if *they* had not been previously disposed to them.

And the same tendency is still to be found, even among those who ought to be enlightened Christians. Many, not merely of the vulgar, but of those who in station are much above the vulgar, entertain a notion (not always expressed in words indeed, but implied in their practice) that ignorance of what relates to their religion, and disinclination to the study and to the thoughts of it, and want of a devout temper, and of holiness of heart and purity of life, are deficiencies which, though highly culpable in a Clergyman, will be overlooked, or not very severely visited, in a Layman : or that at least it will be a great security for them, after a mispent life, to have a Clergyman sit by them on their death-bed, and read prayers over them. How often do men reflect with complacency on

their attendance on the public service of a regular Minister, and derive comfort from the blessing he pronounces on them,—that blessing which entreats that their “ hearts and minds may be kept in the knowledge and love of God,”—while they themselves make no effort to know or to love Him! How often, and how unconcernedly, are inquiries of the utmost importance to salvation thrown aside, and habits decidedly unchristian indulged in, with the careless excuse, “ It matters not for me; I am not in orders!”

The Clergy of *this* Church surely cannot, in general at least, be charged with at all cherishing such delusions. When therefore we find the above-mentioned tendency,—the attempt to be religious by proxy, and to obtain salvation by the Priest’s care instead of their own,—when we find, I say, this tendency so hard to be rooted out, and so ready to spring up afresh, in spite of all the endeavours of the Clergy to convince their flocks that Christ’s Ministers can do nothing for those who will do nothing for themselves, and to teach them how to “ work out their *own* salvation,”—we cannot have a more

decisive proof that the delusions of priestcraft are the work of the people no less than of the Priests;—that they may be traced to the universal principles of human nature;—and that the ONE Religion which is free from them, must be the ONE that is *not* of human origin.

Let the distinctions then which I have endeavoured to point out, be carefully borne in mind, and the errors to which the ambiguity of our word “Priest” gives rise, be watchfully guarded against; that while we rejoice in our deliverance from Romish error, we may keep clear of the spirit of it, and not merely of the name. It is most important, both to the Christian Minister, and to his flock, that both should be fully aware of their respective duties;—that *he* may rightly instruct and lead them, and that *they* may duly attend to his instructions, instead of hoping to substitute his services for their own.

Let them indeed look to a Priest for salvation; only let it be to no earthly Priest, but to that great High Priest, “the Author and Finisher of our Faith,”—whose whole life is an example to us of perfect virtue,—whose death is an all-sufficient atoning sacrifice;—through whose

meritorious sufferings on earth, his sincere and obedient followers hope for justification and acceptance ;—and who is our gracious Mediator in heaven : for “ He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”



THE RIGHT METHOD OF INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE, IN  
WHAT RELATES TO THE NATURE OF THE DEITY,  
AND HIS DEALINGS WITH MANKIND,

ILLUSTRATED IN A

# DISCOURSE ON PREDESTINATION,

By DR. KING,

LATE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

---

Nescire velle quæ magister optimus  
Docere non vult, erudita incitia est.  
Jos. SCALIGER.





## INTRODUCTION.

---

THE immediate occasion of editing the following discourse, was the high commendation very justly bestowed on it by Dr. Copleston, now Bishop of Llandaff, in the notes to his “ Enquiry concerning Predestination.”

The design however had long been entertained of re-introducing to public notice in some form or other a work of such high value, which once enjoyed such well-merited celebrity, but which has for many years been undeservedly forgotten. Considering indeed not only that the author was a person of no mean repute in his day, but that this very discourse attracted so much attention as to pass through at least six editions ; and considering also that its subject is by no means one of temporary interest, and that

it possesses the rare merit of being calculated for almost all descriptions of readers; one is disposed to wonder at its having so far sunk into oblivion, that a large majority probably of theological students have never even heard of it. Yet it is calculated to afford useful hints even to the most learned divine—to furnish the younger student with principles which will form the best basis on which to build his whole system of theology—and to supply even the unlearned reader with most valuable instruction, suited to a moderate capacity, on the most important points. But it is ill-calculated to gratify those who are puffed up with the pride of human learning and ingenuity, and who delight to display their talents in controversy: for it tends in a most eminent degree to lower a presumptuous, and to soften a polemical, spirit: and the pride and bitterness of the arrogant controversialist are too deeply fixed in the heart to let him afford a patient and candid hearing to a professed peace-maker. And this probably may account in great measure both for the obloquy to which the author was exposed at the time, and for this work being afterwards nearly

forgotten. For some account of the unprovoked attacks made upon it, and for a most luminous and concise sketch of the argument, the reader is referred to the first note on Dr. Copleston's third Discourse.

The main objection which has been brought against Dr. King's view of the subject is, that if the moral and intellectual attributes ascribed to God in the Scriptures are not to be understood as the *same* in Him that they are in us, but merely as *analogical* representations, the precepts which direct us to *imitate* the divine perfections will be nullified; for how, it is urged, can we copy them, if we know not what they are? It may be worth while to give a brief summary of what may be said in reply to this objection; referring the reader who is desirous of a full and satisfactory discussion of the subject, to Dr. Copleston's note above mentioned.

I. Since attributes, such as those in question, "have no form or existence of their own, as the whole essence of them consists in their relation to something else<sup>a</sup>;" it is impossible

<sup>a</sup> Copleston's note to Dis. III. p. 128.

there can, in any case, be *any* resemblance between them, except the resemblance of *ratios* or *relations*; and *this* resemblance is *analogy*. When, for instance, we call God just or merciful, we can mean nothing *more* than his being and acting in *relation* to certain objects, in the same manner as a just and merciful man would. So that when we say that the divine attributes are *analogous* to ours, we are asserting the only *kind* of resemblance which can exist in such attributes<sup>b</sup>. For when we attribute, for instance, courage, or temperance, to two *men*, we are in fact only asserting an analogy; since those qualities are perceived only in their effects, and have only a *relative* existence. Dr. King does indeed contend, that, in the case of the divine attributes, this analogy is, in *degree*, incomparably less *close* and *complete*: but this, no one surely will venture to deny. And it should be remembered, that “ he asserts in the strongest terms his belief in the superior excellence of the divine nature, and calls any qualities that are estimable in man, dim shadows and faint

<sup>b</sup> See Elements of Logic, B. iv. ch. v. § 1.

communications only of those attributes which exist in God in complete and adorable perfection<sup>c</sup>."

II. The utmost dissimilarity in the *causes* is no impediment to the most exact correspondence in the *effects*; nor, consequently, is our ignorance of the attributes of the Deity, as they are in Him, any obstacle to our imitating the results of them. When Solomon says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise," he cannot be supposed to imply that the ant possesses the very intellectual qualities which we call, in men, prudence, forethought, and diligence; yet it is not for this reason at all the less fit to be proposed to men as a model; for they may be led, from perceiving the beneficial *results* of that labour to which she is led by instinct, to practise the like, from reason. So also, of the numerous and studiously varied parables delivered by our Lord, there is no one in which the analogy will hold quite closely throughout; and yet no one in which it is not amply sufficient for every practical purpose. Nor was He at all studious in

<sup>c</sup> Copleston's note to Dis. III. p. 132.

every case to make the analogy as complete in all its circumstances as it might have been. For instance, in the parable of the unjust steward, a man acting from the basest motives, is proposed as a model for the imitation of Christians; who are taught to imitate him in the single circumstance of making a careful provision for the future; though the principles from which their conduct springs ought to be the very reverse of his. The same may be observed in numberless other parables and precepts; it is to the *practical result* that the attention is intended to be directed. For instance, this is the case even in the precept, to “love thy neighbour as thyself;” for it is only figuratively that a man is said to *love* himself<sup>d</sup>; the regard which he has for his own happiness being, not in *degree* merely, but in *kind*, very different from any benevolent affections towards another; but the force of the precept is, that *as* we diligently seek to promote our own welfare, without having any further object in view, so we ought also diligently to promote the welfare of others, looking to

<sup>d</sup> Vide Stewart's Outlines, §. 5.

nothing beyond. And this is practically sufficient.

In like manner, when we are told to “be merciful as our Father which is in heaven is merciful,” the obvious meaning of the precept is, that we should study to do good to mankind; and that we should shew kindness “to the unthankful and to the evil,” even as we see that they are partakers of the divine favours; though the circumstance which most increases our admiration for such conduct in a *man*, cannot be supposed to exist in the Deity: for what we most admire in a man, is his submitting to *pain* and *mortification*, and suppressing those *irritable* feelings which ingratitude naturally excites in the *human* breast.

With respect to the general tendency and practical use of this discourse, it should be observed, that though Dr. King’s primary object is to treat of Predestination and the doctrines connected with it, we should greatly underrate the importance of his reasonings, if we supposed them to apply to that point alone. The principles he lays down are at least equally applicable

to every other mysterious doctrine revealed in Scripture. So that if we admit Dr. King's notions to be correct, they must be the proper basis of all sound theology; and the discourse might justly have borne the title of a RULE FOR INTERPRETING RIGHTLY THE SCRIPTURE-ACCOUNTS OF GOD, AND OF HIS DEALINGS WITH MANKIND. In fact, the difficulties respecting prescience and the necessity which it implies, are precisely those which least admit of, and least need, that mode of explanation which Dr. King has adopted; as I have endeavoured to shew in the Appendix, and as may be more fully seen in Tucker's most ingenious and accurate, though prolix and tedious, discussion of the subject, in the twenty-sixth chapter of his "*Light of Nature:*" to which I am indebted for nearly the whole substance of the reasonings I have employed.

It may perhaps be matter of surprise to some readers, that Dr. King's argument should be spoken of in terms of such high commendation, at the same time that he is charged with a want of precision in the use of the words "*contingent*" and "*necessary*," in treating of that very point which is the primary object of his discourse.



But, in fact, the objection to his argument, thus arising, is greater in appearance than in reality. The difficulty he is encountering may seem indeed to vanish, when the precise language of Tucker is applied to the subject; but it will be found, in reality, to have only shifted its place and altered its form: there will still be the same difficulty in reconciling the *responsibility* of the creature with the *omnipotence* of the Creator, which there *seemed* to be in reconciling his *prescience* with our *freedom*: and there will therefore be no less necessity for Dr. King's humble, forbearing, and practical system of interpretation, than there would have been, had his view of the difficulty been in all respects unexceptionable. In Appendix, No. I. however, the reader will find an attempt to arrive at a more precise system of phraseology than Dr. King's, on this part of the subject.<sup>e</sup>

The utility, however, of his mode of reasoning is (as has been already observed) not confined

<sup>e</sup> In Mr. Davison's work on Prophecy, I am represented as adopting Dr. King's views on this point. The mistake (which the Author, several years ago, promised to rectify) arose from his not having read my Notes and Appendix.

to this single point : he himself, by way of illustration, points out its application to several other cases : and a reader of candour and judgment may easily learn to apply, for himself, in a great variety of instances, the principle which Dr. King lays down. And in proportion as this plan is adopted, it may be confidently hoped, that controversial bitterness, and arrogant dogmatism, will be lessened, and the practical utility of the doctrines of Scripture increased.

The obligations I am under to Tucker's *Light of Nature* have been already mentioned. How far I am indebted to Dr. Copleston, those who have perused his "*Enquiry*" will, in part, perceive : I say, *in part*, because having long enjoyed the advantage of familiar intercourse with him, I have derived from his conversation more instruction than from his writings ; and more indeed than it is possible accurately to estimate. When any two persons have been very long accustomed to discuss subjects together, it is difficult, if not impossible, for one of them to state precisely which are his own original ideas, and which are, wholly, or partly, derived from the other : and if he is indebted to that other

for almost the whole of his intellectual training, and has derived from him the very principles on which his reasonings are conducted, he will scarcely be authorized, so far as his views coincide with those of his instructor, to claim any thought as entirely his own; but must make a general acknowledgment of having drawn from him, either directly or indirectly, nearly the whole of his intellectual stores.

I beg leave, however, distinctly to state, that Dr. Copleston is not *responsible* for any thing contained in the present publication; having neither suggested, nor even perused, any part of it, but having merely given a general approbation to the design of reprinting Dr. King's discourse.



A

DISCOURSE

ON

PREDESTINATION.

---

ROMANS viii. 29, 30.

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

§. 1. **I**N these words the Apostle lays down the several steps by which God proceeds in the saving of his elect. First, He knows and considers those, whom he designs for salvation. Secondly, He decrees and predestinates them to be like his Son Jesus Christ, in holiness here, and glory hereafter, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Thirdly, He calls them to the means of salvation. Fourthly, He justifies: and, lastly, He glorifies them. This is the chain and series of

God's dealing with his beloved ; in which he is represented to us as first designing, and then executing, his gracious purposes towards them.

I am very sensible, that great contentions and divisions have happened in the Church of God about predestination and reprobation, about election and the decrees of God ; that learned men have engaged with the greatest zeal and fierceness in this controversy, and the disputes have proved so intricate, that the most diligent reader will perhaps, after all his labour in perusing them, be but little satisfied and less edified by the greatest part of all that has been written upon this subject. And hence it is that considering men of all parties seem at last, as it were by consent, to have laid it aside ; and seldom any now venture to bring it into the pulpit, except some very young or imprudent preachers.

Not but that the doctrine laid down in my text is undoubtedly true and useful, if we could but light on the true and useful way of treating it ; for so our Church has told us, in her Seventeenth Article, where she informs us, " That as the godly consideration of predestination is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness<sup>a</sup> of most unclean living."

<sup>a</sup> See Dr. Copleston's Appendix on the Seventeenth Art. note in p. 202.

The case therefore being thus, I shall endeavour to lay before you that which I take to be the edifying part of the doctrine of Predestination ; and in such a manner (I hope) as to avoid every thing that may give occasion to ignorant or corrupt men to make an ill use of it.

§. 2. In order to this I shall,

First,<sup>b</sup> Consider the representation that the text gives of God, as contriving our salvation ; and shall endeavour to explain how these terms of foreknowing and predestinating are to be understood when attributed to God.

Secondly, why the holy Scriptures represent God to us after this manner.

Thirdly, what use we are to make of this doctrine of God's foreseeing, freely electing, and predestinating men to salvation.

As to the first of these, you may observe, that in the representation here given of God's dealing, there are five acts ascribed to him ; foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying and glorifying. And about each of these, great disputes have arisen among divines, and parties and sects have been formed on the different opinions concerning them. However as to the three last, Protestants seem now pretty well agreed ; but as to the two first, the difference is so great, that on account thereof, there yet remain formed and separate parties, that mutually refuse to communicate with one another : though I believe, if the differences between them were duly examined and stated, they would not

<sup>b</sup> See "Elements of Rhetoric," Part I. ch. i. § 3.

appear to be so great as they seem to be at first view ; nor consequently would there appear any just reason for those animosities, that yet remain between the contending parties.

§. 3. In order to make this evident, we may consider,

1. That it is in effect agreed on all hands, that the nature of God, as it is in itself, is incomprehensible<sup>c</sup> by

<sup>c</sup> Edwards, the opponent of Dr. King, seems to dwell much (as indeed many other writers do) on the distinction between the *nature* of God and his *attributes* ; as if we could comprehend the latter, though not the former : a notion which is fostered by the prevailing custom of speaking of the “ being ” and the “ attributes ” of a Deity, as two distinct points, to be proved separately ; whereas this is in fact setting up a distinction, where there is not, as far as our notions and knowledge are concerned, any substantial difference ; by which means confusion is introduced into our reasonings. For what, in fact, do we know of *any thing*, except its *attributes* ? We know just as much, and as little of it, as we know of its attributes. Any plain Christian who has learned his catechism, will tell us that what he “ chiefly learns ” in the articles of his belief, is, to “ believe in God the Father, who made him and all the world ; in God the Son, who hath redeemed him and all mankind ; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him and all the elect people of God.” And his further expansion of this faith will be found to consist in his believing God’s constant *presence*, and *knowledge* of all we do,—his *wise* and *powerful* government of the world—his being “ a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him,”—and his future coming to judge the world by Christ Jesus. In short his knowledge of God will be found to consist in a knowledge of his attributes, and of those attributes which are *relative to man*.

It is worth observing, however, that imperfectly and indistinctly as we *understand* these attributes, the proof of the *existence* of a Being possessed of them is most clear and full ; being in fact the very same evidence on which we believe in *the existence of one another*. How do we know that men exist ? (that is, not merely beings having a



human understanding: and not only his nature, but likewise his powers and faculties, and the ways and methods in which he exercises them, are so far beyond our reach, that we are utterly incapable of framing exact and adequate notions of them. Thus the Scriptures frequently teach us, particularly St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Ver. 34. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

§. 4. (2.) We ought to remember, that the descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, or of the divine attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate perceptions that we have of him or them; but from some observations we have made of his works, and from the

certain *visible* bodily form; for that is not what we chiefly imply by the word "man;" but *rational agents*, such as we call men;) surely not by the *immediate* evidence of our senses, (since mind is not an object of sight,) but by observing the *things performed*—the manifest *result* of rational contrivance. If we land in a strange country, doubting whether it be inhabited, as soon as we find, for instance, a boat, or a house, we are as perfectly certain that a man has been there, as if he had appeared before our eyes. Now we are surrounded with similar proofs that there is a God.

With respect to the *kind* of knowledge we have of God, we shall best judge of it by attending to the case of children, whose example is in Scripture so strongly put before us. All the knowledge of children respecting their parents, and the other objects around them, is relative: they know not what any thing is in *itself*, but only the *relation* in which it stands to them; and even *that* very *imperfectly*. (See Essay V. First Series.)

consideration of those qualifications, that we conceive would enable us to perform the like. Thus observing great order, conveniency, and harmony in all the several parts of the world, and perceiving that every thing is adapted, and tends to the preservation and advantage of the whole; we are apt to consider, that we could not contrive and settle things in so excellent and proper a manner without great wisdom; and thence conclude that God, who has thus concerted and settled matters, must have wisdom: and having then ascribed to him wisdom, because we see the effects and result of it in his works, we proceed and conclude that he has likewise foresight and understanding, because we cannot conceive wisdom without these, and because if we were to do what we see he has done, we could not expect to perform it without the exercise of these faculties.

And it doth truly follow from hence, that God must either have these or other faculties and powers equivalent to them, and adequate to these mighty effects which proceed from them. And because we do not know what his faculties are in themselves, we give them the names of those powers, that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such effects, and call them wisdom, understanding, and foreknowledge; but at the same time we cannot but be sensible that they are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that we have no direct or proper notion or conception of them. Only we are sure that they have effects like unto those that do proceed from wisdom, understanding, and foreknowledge in us: and when our works fail to resemble them in any

particular, as to perfection, it is by reason of some want or defect in these qualifications.

Thus our reason teaches us to ascribe these attributes to God, by way of resemblance and analogy<sup>d</sup> to such qualities or powers as we find most valuable and perfect in ourselves.

§. 5. (3.) If we look into the holy Scriptures, and consider the representations given us there of God or his attributes, we shall find them generally of the same nature, and plainly borrowed from some resemblance to things with which we are acquainted by our senses. Thus when the holy Scriptures speak of God, they ascribe hands, and eyes, and feet to him: not that it is designed that we should believe that he has any of these members according to the literal signification: but the meaning is, that he has a power to execute all those acts, to the effecting of which these parts in us are instrumental: that is, he can converse with men as well as if he had a tongue and mouth; he can discern all that we do or say as perfectly as if he had eyes and ears; he can reach us as well as if he had hands and feet; he has as true and substantial a being as if he had a body;

<sup>d</sup> The words "resemblance" and "analogy" are not used by Dr. King with a sufficiently precise distinction of their respective senses. On this point, which is one of great importance in the present question, the reader is referred to Dr. Copleston's first note on Discourse III. p. 122, where will be found the most clear and satisfactory statement of the proper use, and of the abuse, of those terms, that has ever appeared. The same note contains also an analysis and a most masterly defence of the present discourse. See also Elements of Logic, B. II. ch. v.

and he is as truly present every where as if that body were infinitely extended. And in truth, if all these things, which are thus ascribed to him, did really and literally belong to him, he could not do what he does near so effectually, as we conceive and are sure he doth them by the faculties and properties which he really possesses, though what they are in themselves be unknown to us.

After the same manner and for the same reason we find him represented as affected with such passions as we perceive to be in ourselves, viz. as angry and pleased, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his resolutions, as full of mercy and provoked to revenge: and yet on reflection we cannot think that any of these passions can literally affect the divine nature. But the meaning confessedly is, that he will as certainly punish the wicked as if he were inflamed with the passion of anger against them; that he will as infallibly reward the good as we will those for whom we have a particular and affectionate love; that when men turn from their wickedness, and do what is agreeable to the divine command, he will as surely change his dispensations towards them, as if he really repented and had changed his mind.

And as the nature and passions of men are thus by analogy and comparison ascribed to God, because these would in us be the principles of such outward actions, as we see he has performed, if we were the authors of them: so in the same manner, and by the same condescension to the weakness of our capacities, we find the powers and operations of our mind ascribed unto him.

As for example, it is the part of a wise man to consider beforehand what is proper for him to do, to prescribe means and methods to obtain his ends, to lay down some scheme or plan of his work before he begins, and to keep resolutely to it in the execution; for if he should be conceived to deviate in any thing from his first purpose, it would argue some imperfection in laying the design, or want of power to execute it. And therefore it is after this manner the Scripture represents God, as purposing and contriving beforehand all his works; and for this reason, wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, and foreknowledge, are ascribed to him: because both reason and Scripture assure us, that we ought to conceive of God as having all the perfection that we perceive to be in these attributes, and that he has all the advantages that these powers or faculties could give him.

The advantages that understanding and knowledge give a man in the use of them, are to enable him to order his matters with conveniency to himself, and consistency in his works; so that they may not hinder or embarrass one another. And inasmuch as all the works of God are so ordered that they have the greatest congruity in themselves, and are most excellently adapted to their several uses and ends; we are sure there is a power in God who orders them, equivalent to knowledge and understanding; and because we know not what it is in itself, we give it these names.

§. 6. Lastly, the use of foreknowledge with us is to prevent any surprise when events happen, and that we may not be at a loss what to do by things coming upon

us unawares. Now inasmuch as we are certain that nothing can surprise God, and that he can never be at a loss what to do in any event; therefore we conclude that God has a faculty to which our foreknowledge bears some analogy, and therefore we call it by that name.

But it does not follow from hence that any of these are more properly and literally in God, after the manner that they are in us, than hands or eyes, than mercy, love, or hatred are; but, on the contrary, we must acknowledge, that those things which we call by these names, when attributed to God, are of so very different a nature from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that in reality there is no more likeness between them than between our hand and God's power: nor can we draw consequences from the real nature of one to that of the other with more justness of reason, than we can conclude, because our hand consists of fingers and joints, that the power of God is distinguished by such parts.

And therefore to argue because foreknowledge as it is in us, if supposed infallible, cannot consist with the contingency<sup>e</sup> of events; that therefore what we call so in

<sup>e</sup> Dr. King appears not to have taken a sufficiently precise view of the sense of the word *contingency*. If we understand by it (as he seems sometimes to have done) the dependence of any event on the will and free choice of any one, then *this* is not inconsistent even with *our* foreknowledge: for a man would not be at all liable to mistake, for instance, in foretelling that mankind will never forsake their habitations and betake themselves to the life of brute beasts; though it certainly depends on their *will*, to do so or not. But in its ordinary sense, the word "contingent" denotes no quality in *events*,

God, cannot, is as far from reason as it would be to conclude, because our eyes cannot see in the dark, that therefore, when God is said to see all things, his eyes must be enlightened with a perpetual sunshine; or because we cannot love or hate without passion, that

but only the relation in which they stand to our *knowledge*; thus, the same thing may be contingent to one person, and at the same time not-contingent (or *certain*, as it is called) to another: for instance, whether such an one was killed or not in the last battle that was fought in India, may be a contingency to his friends in England, but is a certainty to those on the spot. The admirable reasoning therefore of Dr. King does not apply in this case: not because contingency *implies, with us*, ignorance of the event, (for that alone would not be a sufficient ground of exception,) but because it implies *nothing else*: that is the *whole* meaning of the word: so that it is a contradiction in terms to speak of the same things as *known*, and as *contingent*, at the *same* time, to the *same* Being; though that may be contingent to *us* which is known to *God*.

“One example has already been produced in the word *certainty*, which properly relates to the *mind* which thinks, and is improperly transferred to the *object* about which it is thinking. However convenient this transference of the term may be in common life, it leads to the most erroneous conclusions in abstract reasoning: and the further adoption of a term as opposed to it, for the purpose of denoting another class of events, viz. *contingent*, has contributed to fix the error. The same may be said of the term *probable*, which is frequently used as if it denoted some quality in the events themselves, whereas it is merely relative, like *certain* and *contingent*, to the human mind, and is expressive of the manner in which we stand affected by such and such objects.” *Copleston*, p. 80, 81.

The reader is referred for a fuller discussion of this subject to the Appendix, No. I. at the end of this discourse, on the word “necessary,” and those connected with it: and also to Tucker’s “Light of Nature,” c. 26. See also Appendix to Logic: article “Necessary,” &c.

therefore when the Scriptures ascribe these to God, they teach us that he is liable to these affections as we are.

We ought therefore to interpret all these things when attributed to God, as thus expressed only by way of condescension to our capacities, in order to help us to conceive what we are to expect from him, and what duty we are to pay him; and particularly, that the terms of foreknowledge, predestination, nay, of understanding and will, when ascribed to him, are not to be taken strictly or properly, nor are we to think that they are in him after the same manner, or in the same sense, that we find them in ourselves; but, on the contrary, we are to interpret them only by way of analogy or comparison.

That is to say, when we ascribe foreknowledge to him, we mean that he can no more be surprised with any thing that happens, than a wise man, that foresees an event, can be surprised when it comes to pass: nor can he any more be at a loss what he is to do in such a case, than a wise man can, who is most perfectly acquainted with all accidents which may obstruct his design, and has provided against them.

§. 7. So when God is said to predetermine<sup>f</sup> and fore-

<sup>f</sup> This doctrine is perhaps the more insisted on by the sacred writers, from the circumstance that the heathen, from whom so large a portion of their converts was drawn, seem not to have attributed omniscience to their deities; or, at least, to have been doubtful about it.

The frequent use of "shall," by our Bible translators, where, according to the present idiom of our language, "will" would have been the right rendering, is another circumstance (as is remarked by Dr. Copleston, p. 101, note) which favours, to the English reader,



ordain all things according to the counsel of his will, the importance of this expression is, that all things depend as much on God, as if he had settled them according to a certain scheme and design, which he had voluntarily framed in his own mind, without regard had to any other consideration besides that of his own mere will and pleasure.

If then we understand predetermination and predestination in this analogous sense, to give us a notion of the irresistible power of God, and of that supreme dominion he may exercise over his creatures, it will help us to understand what the sovereignty is that God has over us, the submission that we ought to pay him, and the dependence we have upon him.

But it no ways follows from hence that this is incon-

the Calvinistic views. If I am going too far in saying, that the word "will" is *never* used in that translation to denote *simple futurity*, but always *volition*, at least it may safely be asserted that such is the rule *generally* observed. Innumerable instances might be produced of the use of *shall* as a sign of the future tense merely: as, for instance, Obadiah says to Elijah, (1 Kings xviii. 14,) "Thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he shall slay me." So also our Lord says, "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death." Shakespeare indeed frequently uses these words according to the present idiom; but frequently according to the other also; for instance, (Cymbeline, Act i. Scene 6,) "Your highness shall from this practice but make hard your heart:" and again in Troilus and Cressida, Act iv. Scene 4, "O you shall be exposed, my lord, to dangers."

The probability is, that our language was at that period in a state of *transition* as to the use of "will" and "shall;" and that the rule which our Bible-translators have, chiefly at least, adhered to, was that of the *older* use.

sistent with the contingency of events, or free will. And from hence it appears what it is that makes us apt to think so: which is only this, that we find in ourselves when we determine to do a thing, and are able to do what we have resolved on, that thing cannot be contingent to us: and if God's foreknowledge and predetermination were of the same nature with ours, the same inconsistency would be justly inferred. But I have already shewed that they are not of the same kind, and that they are only ascribed to him by way of analogy and comparison, as love and mercy, and other passions are; that they are quite of another nature, and that we have no proper notion of them, any more than a man born blind has of sight and colours; and therefore that we ought no more to pretend to determine what is consistent or not consistent with them, than a blind man ought to determine, from what he hears or feels, to what objects the sense of seeing reaches: for this were to reason from things that are only comparatively and improperly ascribed to God, and by way of analogy and accommodation to our capacities, as if they were properly and univocally the same in him and in us.

If we would speak the truth, those powers, properties, and operations, the names of which we transfer to God, are but faint shadows and resemblances, or rather indeed emblems and parabolical figures of the divine attributes, which they are designed to signify; whereas his attributes are the originals, the true real things of a nature so infinitely superior and different from any thing we discern in his creatures, or that can be conceived by

finite understandings, that we cannot with reason pretend to make any other deductions from the natures of one to that of the others, than those he has allowed us to make ; or extend the parallel any further than that very instance, which the resemblance was designed to teach us.

Thus foreknowledge and predestination, when attributed to God, are designed to teach us the obligations which we owe to him for our salvation, and the dependence we have on his favour ; and so far we may use and press them : but to conclude from thence that these are inconsistent with free will, is to suppose that they are the same in him and us ; and just as reasonable as to infer, because wisdom is compared in Scripture to a tree of life, that therefore it grows in the earth, has its spring and fall, and is warmed by the sun and fed by the rain.

§ 8. And this brings me to the second head which I proposed to myself in this discourse, which was to shew you, why God and heavenly things are after this manner represented to us in holy Scripture. And the first reason that I shall offer is, that we must either be content to know them this way, or not at all. I have already told you, and I believe every considering man is convinced, that the nature and perfections of God, as he is in himself, are such that it is impossible we should comprehend them, especially in the present state of imperfection, ignorance, and corruption, in which this world lies. He is the object of none of our senses, by which we receive all our direct and immediate perception of things : and therefore if we know any thing of him at

all, it must be by deductions of reason, by analogy and comparison, by resembling him to something that we do know and are acquainted with.

It is by this way we arrive at the most noble and useful notions we have, and by this method we teach and instruct others. Thus when we would help a man to some conception of any thing that has not fallen within the reach of his senses, we do it by comparing it to something that already has, by offering him some similitude, resemblance, or analogy, to help his conception. As, for example, to give a man a notion of a country to which he is a stranger, and to make him apprehend its bounds and situation, we produce a map to him, and by that he obtains as much knowledge of it, as serves him for his present purpose. Now a map is only paper and ink, diversified with several strokes and lines, which in themselves have very little likeness to earth, mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers. Yet none can deny but by proportion and analogy they are very instructive; and if any should imagine that these countries are really paper, because the maps that represent them are made of it, and should seriously draw conclusions from that supposition, he would expose his understanding, and make himself ridiculous: and yet such as argue from the faint resemblances that either Scripture or reason give of the divine attributes and operations, and proceed in their reasonings, as if these must in all respects answer one another, fall into the same absurdities that those would be guilty of, who should think countries must be of paper, because the maps that represent them are so.

To apply this more particularly to the case before us. We ascribe decrees and predestination to God, because the things signified by these words bear some resemblance to certain perfections that we believe to be in him. But if we remember that they are only similitudes and representations of them, and that there is as little likeness between the one and the other, as between the countries and maps which represent them: and that the likeness lies not in the nature of them, but in some particular effect or circumstance that is in some measure common to both: we must acknowledge it very unreasonable to expect that they should answer one another in all things: or because the different representations of the same thing cannot be exactly adjusted in every particular, that therefore the thing represented is inconsistent in itself.

Foreknowledge and decrees are only assigned to God to give us a notion of the steadiness and certainty of the divine actions; and if so, for us to conclude that what is represented by them is inconsistent with the contingency of events or free-will, because the things representing (I mean, our foreknowledge and decrees) are so, is the same absurdity, as it is to conclude, that China is no bigger than a sheet of paper, because the map that represents it is contained in that compass.

§. 9. This seems to me a material point, and therefore I will endeavour to illustrate with an instance or two more. Every body is satisfied that time, motion, and velocity, are subjects of very useful knowledge; and that adjusting and discovering the proportions that these

bear to one another, is perhaps all that is profitable in natural philosophy. How is it then, that we proceed in our demonstrations concerning these? Is it not by representing time by a line, the degrees of velocity by another, and the motion that results from both by a superficies or a solid? and from these we draw conclusions, which are not only very true, but also of great moment to arts and sciences; and never fail in our deductions, while we keep justly to the analogy and proportion they bear to one another in the production of natural effects; neither is it easy, nor perhaps possible, to come at such knowledge any other way.

Yet in the nature of the thing, there is no great similitude between a line and time; and it will not be very obvious to a person, who is not acquainted with the method of the skilful in such matters, to conceive how a solid should answer the compounded effect of time and motion. But if any, instead of endeavouring to understand the method and proportions used by the learned in such cases, in order to discover to them these useful truths, should reject the whole as a thing impossible; alleging that we make time a permanent thing and existing altogether, because a line which represents it in this scheme is so, we should think that he hardly deserved an answer to such a foolish objection.

And yet of this nature are most, if not all, the objections that are commonly made against the representations that the Scripture gives us of the divine nature, and of the mysteries of our religion.

§. 10. Thus the holy Scriptures represent to us that

distinction which we are obliged to believe to be in the unity of God, by that of three persons, and the relation they bear to one another, by that of a father to his son, and of a man to his spirit; and those that object against this, and infer that these must be three substances, because three persons among men are so, do plainly forget that these are but representations and resemblances; and fall into the same absurd way of reasoning that the former do, who conclude, that we make time a permanent thing, because a line is so, by which we represent it.

§. 11. Again, if we were to describe to an ignorant American what was meant by writing, and told him that it is a way of making words visible and permanent, so that persons at any distance of time and place may be able to see and understand them; the description would seem very strange to him, and he might object that the thing must be impossible, for words are not to be seen but heard: they pass in the speaking, and it is impossible they should affect the absent, much less those that live in distant ages. To which there needs no other answer than to inform him, that there are other sorts of words beside those he knows, that are truly called so, because equivalent to such as are spoken; that they have both the same use, and serve equally to communicate our thoughts to one another; and that if he will but have patience, and apply himself to learn, he will soon understand, and be convinced of the possibility and usefulness of the thing: and none can doubt but he were much to blame, and acted an unwise part, if he refused to believe

the person that offered to instruct him, or neglected to make the experiment.

And sure when any one objects against the possibility of the Three Persons of the Trinity in one God, it is every whit as good an answer<sup>g</sup> to tell such an objector that there are other sort of persons besides those we see among men, whose personality is as truly different from what we call so, as a word written is different from a word spoken, and yet equivalent to it. And though three persons, such as men are, cannot be in one human nature, as a word spoken cannot be visible and permanent; yet what we call three persons by comparison and analogy, may consist in the unity of the Godhead.

<sup>g</sup> The word Person, in the sense here alluded to, being, as every one knows, not a Scriptural term, but introduced for the purpose of guarding against heresies, by a precise statement of Scriptural doctrine; it would be perhaps, in this case, a more satisfactory answer, to say, that the Greek term "Hypostasis," and the Latin "Persona," were resorted to as the best that could be found to express the belief of the Church in the Divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in such a manner as to keep clear of the supposition of her teaching that there are three Gods, or three *parts* of the one God, or three *properties* merely, or *agencies* of God; it being, I suppose, her meaning, that though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, yet there are certain *attributes* of each of these three respectively, which would not apply to any of the others: for instance, though each and all of these three may be properly called "God," yet when we call the Son our "Redeemer" and "Mediator," these are attributes which do not belong to the Father or the Holy Spirit, *as such*; and in like manner, when we call the Holy Spirit our "Sanctifier," that is an attribute which does not belong to the Father or the Son, *as such*.

The word *Persona*, which was employed to express this distinction,



And after the same manner we ought to answer those who object against the foreknowledge and decrees of God, as inconsistent with the freedom of choice, by telling them, that though such foreknowledge and decrees as are in our understanding and wills cannot consist with contingency, if we suppose them certain; yet what we call so in God may, being quite of a different nature, and only called by those names, by reason of some analogy and proportion which is between them.

And if men will but have patience, and wait the proper time, when faith shall be perfected into vision, and we shall know even as we are known; they may then see

had come (from its original signification of a mask, such as was used on the stage) to signify the fictitious character itself which the actor sustained; and afterwards, any *character* whatever, real or fictitious. “Itaque cum ille discessit, *tres personas unus* sustineo summa animi æquitate, meam, adversarii, judicis.” *Cic. de Orat. b. ii. §. 24.*

In the ordinary sense of the English word “person,” which always implies a *distinct substance*, *Persona* does not I believe once occur in the pure Latin Classics. It is perhaps rather unfortunate, considering what is the ordinary use of our word person, that it should have been adopted as a translation of the Latin word *Persona*, since the point in which the senses of these two words differ is one of such high importance. No imputation however can fairly be cast on the doctrine of our Church; which distinctly teaches that the Son is “of *one substance* with the Father,” thus plainly indicating, that the word “Person,” as employed by her, is *not* to be understood in its ordinary sense, since *that* implies a distinct substance. It is therefore a most unfair cavil, to represent the Trinitarians as holding that God is Three, in *the same sense* in which he is one: which would indeed be a contradiction: and it is weakness to allege that there is any contradiction in holding that what is three in *one sense*, may, in *another sense*, be one. See Elements of Logic, Appendix: Art. “Person.”

and be as well satisfied that there is no absurdity in the trinity of persons, or foreknowledge of contingency, as the Indian is, when he has learned to read and write, that there is no impossibility in visible permanent words.

§. 12. Lastly, It is observable, that no care, industry, or instruction, can ever give a person born, and continuing blind, any notion of light; nor can he ever have any conception how men who have eyes discern the shape and figure at a distance, nor imagine what colours mean: and yet he would, I believe, readily (on the account he receives from others, of the advantage of knowing these things) endure labour and pain, and submit to the most difficult and tormenting operations of physic and chirurgery, in order to obtain the use of his eyes, if any reasonable hope could be given him of the success of such an undertaking. And why then should not we as willingly submit to those easy methods which God has prescribed to us, in order to obtain that knowledge of his nature and attributes in which our eternal satisfaction and happiness hereafter is in a very great measure to consist? And it is certain we now know as much of them, as the blind man, in the case supposed, does of light or colours; and have better reason to seek, and more certain hope of attaining in the next life to a fuller and more complete knowledge, than such a man can have with relation to the use of his eyes, and the advantage of seeing. And then will he not rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us? Since he endures so much to obtain sight on the imperfect representations of it made to him by other men, whilst we

will not believe and endure as much for eternal happiness, on the testimony of God.

§. 13. If it be asked, why these things are not made clear to us? I answer, for the same reason that light and colours are not clear to one that is born blind, even because in this imperfect state we want faculties to discern them: and we cannot expect to reach the knowledge of them whilst here, for the same reason that a child, whilst he is so, cannot speak and discourse as he doth when a grown man; there is a time and season for every thing, and we must wait for that season. There is another state and life for the clear discerning of these matters; but in the mean time we ought to take the steps and methods which are proper for our condition: and, if we will not do so, we can no more expect to arrive to the knowledge of these necessary truths, or that state which will make them plain to us, than a child can hope he shall ever be able to read and write, who will not be persuaded to go to school, or obey his master<sup>h</sup>.

This analogical knowledge of God's nature and attributes is all of which we are capable at present; and we must either be contented to know him thus, or sit down with an entire ignorance and neglect of God, and finally despair of future happiness. But it concerns us frequently to call to mind the Apostle's observation, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." Though our present knowledge of divine things be very imperfect, yet it is enough

<sup>h</sup> See Essay V. First Series.

to awaken our desire of more; and though we do not understand the enjoyments of the blessed, yet the description we have of them is sufficient to engage us to seek after them, and to prosecute the methods prescribed in Scripture for attaining them.

§. 14. And therefore let me offer it as a second reason why God and divine things are thus represented to us in Scripture<sup>i</sup>, *viz.* That such knowledge is sufficient to all the intents and purposes of religion; the design whereof is to lead us in the way of eternal happiness, and in order thereunto, to teach and oblige us to live reasonably, to perform our duty to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, to conquer and mortify our passions and lusts, to make us beneficent and charitable to men, and to oblige us to love, obey, and depend upon God<sup>k</sup>.

Now it is easy to shew that such a knowledge as I have described, is sufficient to obtain all these ends: for though I know not what God is in himself, yet if I believe he is able to hurt or help me, to make me happy or miserable, this belief is sufficient to convince me, that it is my duty to fear him. If I be assured that all his works are done with regularity, order, and fitness; that nothing can surprise or disappoint him; that he can never be in any doubt, or at a loss what is proper for him to do; though I do not comprehend the faculties by

<sup>i</sup> It has been objected, that Dr. King's representation of the divine attributes does away the force of those passages of Scripture, which command us to imitate the divine perfections: for some remarks on this subject, see the Introduction.

<sup>k</sup> See Essay IV. First Series.

which he performs so many admirable and amazing things, yet I know enough to make me adore and admire his conduct. If I be satisfied that I can no more expect to escape free, when I break the laws and rules he has prescribed me, than a subject can who assaults his prince in the midst of all his guards; this is enough to make me cautious about every word I speak, and every action I perform, and to put me out of all hope of escaping when I offend him.

If I am convinced that God will be as steady to the rules he has prescribed for my deportment as a wise and just prince will be to his laws; this alone will oblige me to a strict observation of the divine commands, and assure me that I must be judged according as I have kept or transgressed them.

If a man be convinced that by his sins he has forfeited all right and title to happiness, and that God is under no obligation to grant him pardon for them; that only the free mercy of God can put him into the way of salvation; and that he may as well without imputation of injustice pardon one, and pass by another, as a prince may, of many equal malefactors, reprieve one for an instance of his mercy and power, and suffer the rest to be carried to execution: if a man, I say, finds himself under these circumstances, he will have the same obligations of gratitude to his God, that the pardoned offender owes to his prince, and impute his escape entirely to the peculiar favour of God, that made the distinction between him and others without any regard to their merits.

If we believe that there is a distinction in the manner

of the subsisting of the divine nature, that requires such particular applications from us to God as we pay to three distinct persons here; and that he has such distinct and really different relations to himself and to us on this account, as three men have to one another; that is enough to oblige us to pay our addresses to him as thus distinguished, and to expect as different benefits and blessings from him under this distinction, as we expect from different persons here: and it can be no hindrance to our duty, that we are ignorant of the nature and manner of that distinction.

Let us consider how many honour and obey their prince, who never saw him, who never had any personal knowledge of him, and could not distinguish him from another man if they should meet him. This will shew us, that it is not necessary that we should personally know our governor, to oblige us to perform our duty to him: and if many perform their duty to their prince without knowing him, why should it seem strange that we should be obliged to do our duty to God, though we do not know any more of his person or nature but that he is our Creator and Governor?

Lastly, To shew that this kind of knowledge is sufficient for salvation, let us suppose one who takes all the descriptions we have of God literally, who imagines him to be a mighty King that sits in heaven, and has the earth for his footstool; that at the same time hath all things in his view which can happen; that has thousands and thousands of ministers to attend him, all ready to obey and execute his commands; that has a great love

and favour for such as diligently obey his orders, and is in a rage and fury against the disobedient: could any one doubt but he, who in the simplicity of his heart should believe these things, as literally represented, would be saved by virtue of that belief, or that he would not have motives strong enough to oblige him to love, honour, and obey God?

If it should be objected that such representations do not exactly answer the nature of things, I confess this is true; but I would desire you to consider, that the best representations we can make of God are infinitely short of the truth, and that the imperfections of such representations will never be imputed to us as a fault, provided we do not wilfully dishonour him by unworthy notions; and our conceptions of him be such as may sufficiently oblige us to perform the duties he requires at our hands.

And if any one farther allege, that he who takes these representations literally, will be involved in many difficulties, and that it will be easy to shew that there are great inconsistencies in them, if we understand them according to the letter;

I answer, he is to be looked upon as very officious and impertinent, that will raise such objections, and put them in the heads of plain, honest people, who by the force of such common though figurative knowledge (as it may be termed) practise the substantial and real duties of religion, that lead them to eternal happiness.

It is true, when curious and busy persons by the unreasonable abuse of their knowledge have raised such

objections, they must be answered: and it is then necessary to shew in what sense these representations ought to be taken; and that they are to be understood by way of comparison, as condescensions to our weakness.

But though these objections are easily answered, yet he who makes them unnecessarily is by no means excused, because they often occasion disturbance to weak people. Many that may be shocked by the difficulty, may not be capable of readily understanding the answers: and therefore thus to raise such scruples, is to lay a stumbling-block in the way of our weak brethren, and perplex them with notions and curiosities, the knowledge of which is no way necessary to salvation.

We ought therefore to consider that it was in great mercy and compassion to the ignorance and infirmity of men, that the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to give us such representations of the divine nature and attributes. He knew what knowledge was most proper for us, and what would most effectually work on us to perform our duty: and if we take things as the Scripture represents them, it cannot be denied but they are well adapted to our capacities, and must have a mighty influence on all that sincerely believe them; in truth, greater than all those nice speculations that we endeavour to substitute in their place.

§. 15. But, thirdly, if we consider seriously the knowledge that we have of the creatures, and even of those things in this world with which we are most familiarly acquainted, it will appear that the conceptions we have of them are much of the same sort as those are which



religion gives us of God, and that they neither represent the nature or essential properties of the things as they are in themselves, but only the effects they have in relation to us. For in most cases we know no more of them but only how they affect us, and what sensations they produce in us.

Thus, for example, light and the sun are the most familiar and useful things in nature: we have the comfortable perception of them by our senses of seeing and feeling, and enjoy the benefit and advantage of them; but what they are in themselves we are entirely ignorant.

I think it is agreed by most that write of natural philosophy, that light and colours are nothing but the effects of certain bodies and motions on our sense of seeing, and that there are no such things at all in nature, but only in our minds: and of this at least we may be sure, that light in the sun or air, are very different things from what they are in our sensations of them; yet we call both by the same name, and term that which is only perhaps a motion in the air, light; because it begets in us that conception which is truly light. But it would seem very strange to the generality of men, if we should tell them, that there is no light in the sun, or colours in the rainbow; and yet, strictly speaking, it is certain, that which in the sun causes the conception of light in us, is as truly different in nature from the representation we have of it in our minds, as our foreknowledge is from what we call so in God.

§. 16. The same may be observed concerning the objects of our other senses, such as heat and cold, sweet

and bitter, and which we ascribe to the things that affect our touch and taste. Whereas it is manifest, that these are only the sensations that the actions of outward things produce in us. For the fire that burns us has no such pain in it as we feel, when we complain of its heat; nor ice, such as we call cold.

Nevertheless, we call the things, whose actions on our senses cause these sensations in us, by the same name we give to our conceptions of them, and treat and speak of them as if they were the same: we say the fire is hot, because it produceth heat in us; and that the sun is light, because it affects our eyes in such a manner, as enables us to frame that thought which we then perceive in ourselves. But in the mean time we are altogether ignorant what it is particularly in the fire and the sun that has these effects on us, or how it comes thus to affect us. And yet this ignorance of ours doth not hinder us from the use or advantage that nature designed us in these sensations; nor does our transferring to the objects themselves the names that we give our own perceptions of them draw any evil consequences after it; on the contrary, they serve the uses of life, as well as if we knew the very things themselves. The sun, by giving me the sensation of light, directs and refreshes me, as much as if I knew what its nature and true substance are. For, in truth, men are no farther concerned to know the nature of any thing, than as it relates to them, and has some effect on them. And if they know the effects of outward things, and how far they are to use or avoid them, it is sufficient.

If then such knowledge of natural things, as only shews the effects they have on us, be sufficient to all the uses of life, though we do not know what they are in themselves; why should not the like representation of God and his attributes be sufficient for the ends of religion, though we be ignorant of his and their nature?

Every one knows, that steadiness, regularity, and order, do always proceed from wisdom. When therefore we observe these in the highest degree in all the works of God, shall we not say that God is infinitely wise, because we are ignorant what that really is in itself which produces such stupendous effects? though after all, wisdom, as in us, be as different from what we call so in God, as light in our conception is different from the motion in the air that causes it.

§. 17. We all of us feel a tendency to the earth, which we call gravity, but none ever yet was able to give any satisfactory account of its nature or cause; but in as much as we know, that falling down a precipice will crush us to pieces, the sense we have of this effect of it is sufficient to make us careful to avoid such a fall. And in like manner, if we know that breaking God's commands will provoke him to destroy us, will not this be sufficient to oblige us to obedience, though we be ignorant what it is we call anger in him?

§. 18. I might go through all the notices we have of natural things, and shew that we only know and distinguish them by the effects they produce on our senses, and make you sensible that such knowledge sufficiently serves the purposes of life. And no reason can be given

why the representations given us in Scripture of God and divine things, though they do only shew us the effects that proceed from them, should not be sufficient to answer the purposes of religion.

Particularly we ascribe foreknowledge to God, because we are certain that he cannot be surprised by any event, nor be at any loss what he is to do when it happens. And thereby we give him all the perfection we can, and assure ourselves that we cannot deceive him.

After the same manner we ascribe predestination to him, and conceive him as predetermining every thing that comes to pass, because all his works are as steady and certain, as if he had predetermined them after the same manner that wise men do theirs.

We farther represent him as absolutely free, and all his actions as arising only from himself, without any other consideration but that of his own will; because we are sure, the obligations we owe to him are as great as if he acted in this wise. We are as much obliged to magnify his free mercy and favour to us, to humble our minds before him, and return our tribute of gratitude to him, as if our salvation entirely proceeded from his mere good will and pleasure, without any thing being required on our part in order to it.

§. 19. Let me in the fourth place observe, that as we transfer the actions of our own minds, our powers, and virtues, by analogy to God, and speak of him as if he had the like; so we proceed the same way in the representations we make to one another of the actions of our minds, and ascribe the powers and faculties of bodies to

the transactions that pass in them. Thus to weigh things, to penetrate, to reflect, are proper actions of bodies, which we transfer to our understandings, and commonly say, that the mind weighs or penetrates things, that it reflects on itself or actions; thus to embrace or reject, to retain or let slip, are corporeal performances, and yet we ascribe the first to the will, and the last to the memory. And it is manifest that this does not cause any confusion in our notions: though none will deny but there is a vast difference between weighing a piece of money in a scale, and considering a thing in our minds; between one body's passing through another, which is properly penetrating, and the understanding's obtaining a clear notion of a thing hard to be comprehended. And so in all the rest, there is indeed a resemblance and analogy between them, which makes us give the same names to each: but to compare them in all particulars, and expect they should exactly answer, would run us into great absurdities. As for example, it would be ridiculous to think that weighing a thing in our minds should have all the effects, and be accompanied with all the circumstances that are observable in weighing a body.

§. 20. Now to apply this, let us consider that love, hatred, wisdom, knowledge, and foreknowledge, are properly faculties or actions of our minds; and we ascribe them to God after the same manner that we do reflection, penetrating, discovering, embracing, or rejecting, to our intellectual actions and faculties, because there is some analogy and proportion between them. But then we

ought to remember, that there is as great a difference between these, when attributed to God, and as they are in us, as between weighing in a balance and thinking; in truth, infinitely greater; and that we ought no more to expect that the one should in all respects and circumstances answer the other, than that thinking in all things should correspond to weighing. Would you not be surprised to hear a man deny, and obstinately persist in it, that his mind can reflect upon itself, because it is impossible that a body, from whence the notion is originally taken, should move or act on itself? and is it not equally absurd to argue, that what we call foreknowledge in God, can not consist with the contingency or freedom of events, because our prescience, from whence we transfer the notion to the divine understanding, could not if it were certain? And is it not equally a sufficient answer to both, when we say that the reflection of bodies, though in many circumstances it resembles that action of the mind which we call so, yet in other particulars they are mighty unlike? And though the foreknowledge that we have in some things resembles what we term so in God, yet the properties and effects of these in other particulars are infinitely different.

Nor can we think that whatever is impossible in the one, must be likewise so in the other. It is impossible motion should be in a body, except it be moved by another, or by some other external agent; and it requires a space in which it is performed, and we can measure it by feet and yards; but we should look on him as a very weak reasoner, that would deny any motion to be in the

mind, because he could find none of those there. And we should think that we had sufficiently answered this objection, by telling him that these two motions are of very different natures, though there be some analogy and proportion between them. And shall not the same answer satisfy those that argue against the divine foreknowledge, predestination, and other actions attributed to God, because many things are supposed possible to them, which are impossible to us?

§. 21. It may be objected against this doctrine, that if it be true, all our descriptions of God and discourses concerning him will be only figures and metaphors; that he will be only figuratively merciful, just, intelligent, and foreknowing: and perhaps in time, religion and all the mysteries thereof will be lost in mere figure.

But I answer, that there is great difference between the analogical representations of God, and that which we commonly call figurative. The common use of figures is to represent things that are otherwise very well known, in such a manner as may magnify or lessen, heighten or adorn, the ideas we have of them. And the design of putting them in this foreign dress, as we may call it, is to move our passions, and engage our fancies more effectually than the true and naked view of them is apt to do, or perhaps ought. And from hence it too often happens, that these figures are employed to deceive us, and make us think better or worse of things than they really deserve.

But the analogies and similitudes that the holy Scriptures or our own reason frame of divine things are of

another nature; the use of them is to give us some notion of things whereof we have no direct knowledge, and by that means lead us to perception of the nature, or at least of some of the properties and effects of what our understandings cannot directly reach, and in this case to teach us how we are to behave ourselves towards God, and what we are to do in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of his attributes.

§. 22. And whereas in ordinary figurative representations, the thing expressed by the figure is commonly of much less moment than that to which it is compared: in these analogies the case is otherwise, and the things represented by them have much more reality and perfection in them, than the things by which we represent them. Thus weighing a thing in our minds is a much more noble and perfect action, than examining the gravity of a body by scale and balance, which is the original notion from whence it is borrowed; and reflection as in our understandings is much more considerable, than the rebounding of one hard body from another, which yet is the literal sense of reflection. And after the same manner, what we call knowledge and foreknowledge in God, have infinitely more reality in them, and are of greater moment than our understanding or prescience, from whence they are transferred to him; and, in truth, these as in man are but faint communications of the divine perfections, which are the true originals, and which our powers and faculties more imperfectly imitate than a picture does a man: and yet if we reason from them by analogy and proportion, they



are sufficient to give us such a notion of God's attributes, as will oblige us to fear, love, obey, and adore him.

If we lay these things together, I suppose, they will furnish us with sufficient reasons to satisfy us why the holy Scriptures represent divine things to us by types and similitudes, by comparisons and analogies, and transferring to God the notions of such perfections as we observe in ourselves, or other creatures: since it appears that we are not capable of better; that such knowledge answers all the designs of religion; and that when the matter is duly examined, we hardly know any thing without ourselves in a more perfect manner.

I shall therefore proceed to the third and last thing I proposed, which was to shew the uses we ought to make of what has been said, particularly of God's foreknowing and predestinating his elect to holiness and salvation.

§. 23. And first, from the whole it appears that we ought not to be surprised, when we find the Scriptures giving different and seemingly contradictory schemes of divine things<sup>1</sup>.

It is manifest that several such are to be found in holy writ. Thus God is frequently said in Scripture to repent and turn from the evil that he proposed against sinners; and yet in other places we are told, that "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent." So Numb. xxiii. 19. Thus Psalm xviii. 11, God is represented as dwelling in thick darkness: "he made darkness his secret place; his

<sup>1</sup> See Essay VII. Second Series.

pavilion round about him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky." And yet, 1 Tim. vi. 16, he is described as "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." And, 1 John i. 5, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Thus in the second Commandment God is represented as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him." And yet, Ezek. xviii. 20, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son;" and ver. 4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

After the same manner, we are forbid by our Saviour, Matt. vi. 7, "to use vain repetitions as the heathen do; or to think that we shall be heard for our much speaking; because, ver. 8, "your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." And yet, Luke xviii. 1, we are encouraged "always to pray, and not to faint:" and this is recommended to us by the parable of an importunate widow, who through her incessant applications became uneasy to the judge, and by her continual cries and petitions so troubled him, that to procure his own ease he did her justice: ver. 5; "Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Thus it is said, Exod. xxxiii. 11, "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend." And yet, in ver. 20, he declares to the same Moses, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live." There are multitudes of other instances

of the like nature, that seem to carry some appearance of a contradiction in them, but are purposely designed to make us understand, that these are only ascribed to God by way of resemblance and analogy, and to correct our imaginations, that we may not mistake them for perfect representations, or think that they are in God in the same manner that the similitudes represent them, and to teach us not to stretch those to all cases, or farther than they are intended.

§. 24. We ought to remember, that two things may be very like one another in some respects, and quite contrary in others; and yet to argue against the likeness in one respect from the contrariety in the other, is as if one should dispute against the likeness of a picture, because that is made of canvas, oil, and colours, whereas the original is flesh and blood.

Thus in the present case, God is represented as an absolute Lord over his creatures, of infinite knowledge and power, that doth all things for his mere pleasure, and is accountable to none; as one that “will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens;” that foresees, predestinates, calls, justifies, glorifies whom he will, without any regard to the creatures whom he thus deals with. This gives us a mighty notion of his sovereignty, at once stops our mouths and silences our objections,—obliges us to an absolute submission and dependence on him, and withal to acknowledge the good things we enjoy to be entirely due to his pleasure: this is plainly the design and effect of this terrible representation; and the meaning is, that we

should understand that God is no way obliged to give us an account of his actions; that we are no more to inquire into the reasons of his dealing with his creatures, than if he really treated them in this arbitrary method. By the same we are taught to acknowledge, that our salvation as entirely depends on him, and that we owe it as much to his pleasure, as if he had bestowed it on us without any other consideration but his own will to do so. Thus, James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." And that we might not think there could be any thing in our best works, the prospect whereof could move God to shew kindness to us, the Scriptures give us to understand, that those good works are due to his grace and favour, and the effects, not causes of them. So Ephes. ii. 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

§. 25. All which representations are designed as a scheme, to make us conceive the obligations we owe to God, and how little we can contribute to our own happiness. And to make us apprehend this to be his meaning, he has on other occasions given us an account of his dealing with men, not only different, but seemingly contradictory to this. Thus he frequently represents himself, as proposing nothing for his own pleasure or advantage in his transactions with his creatures; as having no other design in them, but to do those creatures good; as earnestly desiring and prosecuting that end

only. Nay, he represents himself to us as if he were as uneasy and troubled when we failed to answer his expectations, as we may conceive a good, merciful, and beneficent prince, that had only his subjects' happiness in view, would be, when they refused to join with him for promoting their own interest. And God, farther to express his tenderness towards us, and how far he is from imposing any thing on us, lets us know that he has left us to our own freedom and choice ; and to convince us of his impartiality, declares that he acts as a just and equal judge, that he hath no respect of persons, and favours none, but rewards and punishes all men, not according to his own pleasure, but according to their deserts: "and in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is accepted with him." Acts x. 35.

§. 26. Whoever is acquainted with the holy Scriptures, will find all these things plainly delivered to them. Thus to shew us that God proposes no advantages to himself in his dealings with us, he is described as a person wholly disinterested. Job xxii. 2, 3, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" And chap. xxxv. 6, 7, "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand?" And as to his leaving us to the liberty of our own choice, observe how he is represented, Deut. xxx. 19; "I call heaven and earth this day to record

against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing ; therefore choose life."

And as to his earnest concern for our salvation, he orders the prophet Ezekiel to deliver this message from him : chap. xxxiii. 11 ; " Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" And Hosea xi. 8, " How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? How shall I make thee as Admah ? How shall I set thee as Zeboim ? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

Every one may see how distant this view of God, and of his dealings with his creatures, is from the former : and yet if we consider it as a scheme framed to make us conceive how graciously, mercifully, and justly God treats us, notwithstanding the supreme and absolute dominion he has over us, there will be no inconsistency between the two. You see here, that though the creatures be in his hand, as *clay* in the *potter's*, of which he may make vessels of *honour* or *dishonour*<sup>m</sup>, without any injury, or being accountable ; yet he uses that power, with all the passionate love and concern that parents shew towards their children : and therefore we are to conceive of him as having all the tenderness of affection that parents feel in their heart towards their young ones ; and that if he had been so affected, he could not (considering our circumstances) have gone farther than he

<sup>m</sup> See Essay III. §. 3, Second Series.

has done to save us ; that our destruction is as entirely due to ourselves, as if we were out of God's power, and absolutely in the hands of our own counsel.<sup>n</sup>

§. 27. If we take these as schemes designed to give us different views of God, and his transactions with men, in order to oblige us to distinct duties which we owe him, and stretch them no farther, they are very reconcilable. And to go about to clash the one against the other, and argue, as many do, that if the one be true, the other cannot, is full as absurd as to object against that article of our belief, that Christ sits on the right hand of God, because Scripture in other places, and plain reason, assure us that God hath neither hand nor parts.

And whilst a thing may in one respect be like another, and in other respects be like the contrary ; and whilst we know that thing only by resemblance, similitude, or proportion, we ought not to be surprised that the representations are contrary, and taken from things that seem irreconcilable, or that the different views of the same thing should give occasion to different, nay contrary schemes.

§. 28. We ought farther to consider, that these are not so much designed to give us notions of God as he is in himself, as to make us sensible of our duty to him, and to oblige us to perform it. As for example, when the Scriptures represent God as an absolute Lord, that has his creatures entirely in his power, and treats them according to his pleasure ; as one that is not obliged to consider their advantage at all, or any thing but his own

<sup>n</sup> See Essay VII. Second Series.

will; that may elect one to eternal salvation, and pass over another, or condemn him to eternal misery, without any other reason but because he will do so; when we read this, I say, in the holy Scriptures, we ought not to dispute whether God really acts thus or no, or how it will suit with his other attributes of wisdom and justice to do so; but the use we ought to make of it is to call to mind what duty and submission we ought to pay to one who may thus deal with us if he please, and what gratitude we ought to return him, for electing and decreeing us to salvation, when he lay under no manner of obligation to vouchsafe us that favour.

Again, when we find him represented as a gracious and merciful Father, that treats us as children, that is solicitous for our welfare, that would not our death or destruction; that has done all things for our eternal happiness, which could be done without violating the laws of our creation, and putting a force upon our natures; that has given us free-will, that we might be capable of rewards at his hands, and have the pleasure of choosing for ourselves; which only can make us happy, and like unto himself, in the most noble operations of which a Being is capable; that has given us all the invitations and encouragements to choose well, that mercy could prompt him to, or that the justice which is due to himself and creatures would allow, and that never punishes us, but when the necessity and support of his government requires he should: when we hear these things, we are not so much to inquire whether this representation exactly suits with what really passes in his



mind, as how we ought to behave ourselves in such a case towards him that has dealt so graciously with us.

§. 29. And though these representations be but descriptions fitted to our capacities, through God's great condescension towards us ; yet it is certain, that there is as much mercy, tenderness, and justice in the conduct of God, as this scheme represents ; and on the other hand, that we owe as much fear, submission, and gratitude to him, as if the first were the method he took with us.

We make no scruple to acknowledge, that love and hatred, mercy and anger, with other passions, are ascribed to God ; not that they are in him, as we conceive them, but to teach us how we are to behave ourselves toward him, and what treatment we may expect at his hands. And if so, why should we make any difficulty to think that foreknowledge, purposes, elections, and decrees are attributed to him, after the same way, and to the same intent ?

§. 30. The second use that I shall make of this doctrine, is to put you in mind, how cautious we ought to be in our reasonings and deductions concerning things, of whose nature we are not fully apprized. It is true, that in matters we fully comprehend, all is clear and easy to us, and we readily perceive the connexion and consistency of all the parts ; but it is not so in things to which we are in a great measure strangers, and of which we have only an imperfect and partial view, for in these we are very apt to fancy contradictions, and to think the accounts we receive of them absurd.

The truth of this is manifest from innumerable in-

stances : as for example, from the opinion of the Antipodes : whilst the matter was imperfectly known, how many objections were made against it ? How many thought they had proved to a demonstration the impossibility and contradiction of the thing ? And how far did they prevail with the generality of the world to believe them ? And yet how weak, and in truth foolish do all their arguments appear to men that know, and by experience understand the matter ?

Others will say the same concerning the motion of the earth, notwithstanding the great confidence with which many have undertaken to demonstrate it to be impossible ; the reason of which is the imperfect knowledge we have of the thing : and as our understanding of it is more and more enlarged and cleared, the contradictions vanish.

Ought we not then to think all the contradictions we fancy between the foreknowledge of God and contingency of events, between predestination and free-will, to be the effects of our ignorance and partial knowledge ? May it not be in this, as in the matter of the Antipodes, and motion of the earth ? May not the inconsistencies that we find in the one, be as ill-grounded as those that have been urged against the others ? And have we not reason to suspect, nay believe, this to be the case ; since we are sure that we know much less of God and his attributes, than of the earth and heavenly motions.

§. 31. Even in the sciences that are most common and certain, there are some things which, amongst those that are unacquainted with such matters, would pass for contradictions. As for example, let us suppose one should

happen to mention *negative quantities* among persons strangers to the mathematics; and being asked what is meant by those words, should answer, that he understands by them quantities that are conceived to be less than nothing; and that one of their properties is, that being multiplied by a number less than nothing, the product may be a magnitude greater than any assigned. This might justly appear a riddle, and full of contradictions, and perhaps will do so to a great part of my auditors. Something less than nothing in appearance is a contradiction; a number less than nothing has the same face: that these should be multipliable on one another, sounds very oddly; and that the product of less than nothing upon less than nothing should be positive, and greater than any assigned quantity, seems inconceivable. And yet, if the most ignorant will but have patience, and apply themselves for instruction to the skilful in these matters, they will soon find all the seeming contradictions vanish, and that the assertions are not only certain, but plain and easy truths, that may be conceived without any great difficulty.

Ought we not then to suspect our own ignorance, when we fancy contradictions in the descriptions given us of the mysteries of our faith and religion? And ought we not to wait with patience till we come to heaven, the proper school where these things are to be learned? And in the mean time, acquiesce in that light the holy Spirit has given us in the Scriptures; which, as I have shewed, is sufficient to direct us in our present circumstances.

§. 32. ° The third use I shall make of this doctrine is to teach us what answer we are to give that argument that has puzzled mankind, and done so much mischief in the world. It runs thus; “ If God foresee or predestinate that I shall be saved, I shall infallibly be so; and if he foresee or have predestinated that I shall be damned, it is unavoidable. And therefore it is no matter what I do, or how I behave myself in this life.” Many answers have been given to this, which I shall not at present examine: I shall only add, that if God's *foreknowledge* were exactly conformable to ours, the consequence would seem just; but inasmuch as they are of as different a nature as any two faculties of our souls, it doth not follow (because our foresight of events, if we suppose it infallible, must presuppose a necessity in them) that therefore the divine prescience must require the same necessity in order to its being certain. It is true, we call God's *foreknowledge* and our own by the same name; but this is not from any real likeness in the nature of the faculties, but from some proportion observable in the effects of them; both having this advantage, that they prevent any surprise on the person endowed with them.

Now as it is true, that no contingency or freedom in the creatures can any way deceive or surprise God, put him to a loss, or oblige him to alter his measures; so on the other hand it is likewise true, that the divine prescience doth not hinder freedom; and a thing may either be or not be, notwithstanding that foresight of it which

° See Appendix, No. I. at the end of this discourse, on the use of the word necessary, and those connected with it.

we ascribe to God. When therefore it is alleged, that if God foresees I shall be saved, my salvation is infallible, this doth not follow; because the foreknowledge of God is not like man's, which requires necessity in the event, in order to its being certain, but of another nature consistent with contingency: and our inability to comprehend this arises from our ignorance of the true nature of what we call foreknowledge in God; and it is as impossible we should comprehend the power thereof, or the manner of its operation, as that the eye should see a sound, or the ear hear light and colours.

Only of this we are sure, that in this it differs from ours, that it may consist either with the being or not being of what is said to be foreseen or predestinated. Thus St. Paul was a chosen vessel, and he reckons himself in the number of the predestinated, Eph. i. 5, "having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself;" and yet he supposes it possible<sup>p</sup> for him to miss of salvation; and therefore he looked on himself as obliged to use mortification, and exercise all other graces, in order to make his calling and election sure; lest, as he tells us, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," or a reprobate, as the word is translated in other places.

§. 33. The fourth use I shall make of this doctrine is to enable us to discover what judgment we are to pass on those that have managed this controversy: and for mine own part I must profess, that they seem to me to have

<sup>p</sup> See Appendix, No. I. at the end, on the word necessary.

taken shadows for substances, resemblances for the things they represent; and by confounding these, have embroiled themselves and readers in inextricable difficulties.

Whoever will look into the books writ on either side, will find this to be true. But because that is a task too difficult for the generality of men, let them consider the two schemes of the Predestinarians and Freewillers, in the present Bishop of Sarum's Exposition of the Seventeenth Article of our Church; where they will (as I think) find the opinions of both parties briefly, fully, and fairly represented, and withal perceive this error runs through both.

As for example, the great foundation of the one scheme is, that God acts for himself and his glory, and therefore he can only consider the manifestation of his own attributes and perfections in every action; and hence they conclude that he must only damn or save men, as his doing of one or other may most promote his glory.

But here it is manifest that they who reason thus are of opinion, that the desire of glory doth really move the will of God; whereas glory, and the desire of it, are only ascribed to God in an analogical sense, after the same manner as hands and feet, love and hatred are; and when God is said to do all things for his own glory, it is not meant that the desire of glory is the real end of his actions, but that he has ordered all things in such an excellent method, that if he had designed them for no other end, they could not have set it forth more effectually. Now to make this figurative expression the foundation of so many harsh conclusions, and the occa-

sions of so many contentions and divisions in the Church, seems to me the same kind of mistake that the Church of Rome commits, in taking the words of Scripture, "this is my body," literally; from whence so many absurdities and contradictions to our senses and reason are inferred.

§. 34. Secondly, If you look diligently into these schemes, you will find a great part of the dispute arises on this question, What is first or second in the mind of God? Whether he first foresees and then determines, or first determines and by virtue of that foresees? This question seems the more strange, because both parties are agreed, that there is neither first nor last in the divine understanding, but all is one single act in him, and continues the same from all eternity. What then can be the meaning of the dispute? Sure it can be no more than this, Whether it be more honourable for God, that we should conceive him as acting this way or that, since it is confessed that neither reaches what really passes in his mind: so that the question is not concerning the operations of God, as they are in themselves, but concerning our way of conceiving them, whether it be more for his honour to represent them according to the first or second scheme; and certainly the right method is to use both on occasion, so far as they may help us to conceive honourably of the divine Majesty; and to deal ingenuously with the world, and tell them, that where these schemes have not that effect, or where through our stretching them too far, they induce us to entertain dishonourable thoughts of him, or encourage disobedience,

they are not applicable to him. In short, that God is as absolute as the first represents him, and man as free as the last would have him to be: and that these different and seemingly contradictory schemes are brought in to supply the defects of one another.

§. 35. And therefore, thirdly, the managers of this controversy ought to have looked on these different schemes as chiefly designed to inculcate some duties to us; and to have pressed them no farther than as they tended to move and oblige us to perform those duties. But they, on the contrary, have stretched these representations beyond the Scripture's design, and set them up in opposition to one another; and have endeavoured to persuade the world that they are inconsistent: insomuch that some, to establish contingency and free-will, have denied God's prescience; and others, to set up predestination, have brought in a fatal necessity of all events.

<sup>a</sup> And not content therewith, they have accused one another of impiety and blasphemy, and mutually charged each the other's opinion with all the absurd consequences they fancied were deducible from it. Thus the maintainers of free-will charge the predestinarians as guilty of ascribing injustice, tyranny, and cruelty to God, as making him the author of all the sin and misery that is in the world; and, on the other hand, the asserters of predestination have accused the others, as destroying the

<sup>a</sup> A most admirable specimen of the temper, moderation, and reverent caution which should appear in treating of such subjects, is to be found in Mr. (now Bishop) Sumner's excellent treatise on "Apostolical preaching."



independency and dominion of God, and subjecting him to the will and humours of his creatures: and if either of the schemes were to be taken literally and properly, the maintainers of them would find difficulty enough to rid themselves of the consequences charged on them; but if we take them only as analogical representations, as I have explained them, there will be no ground or reason for these inferences.

§. 36. And it were to be wished, that those who make them would consider, that if they would prosecute the same method in treating the other representations, that the Scriptures give us of God's attributes and operations, no less absurdities would follow: as for example, when God is said to be merciful, loving, and pitiful, all-seeing, jealous, patient, or angry; if these were taken literally, and understood the same way as we find them in us, what absurd and intolerable consequences would follow; and how dishonourably must they be supposed to think of God, who ascribe such passions to him? Yet nobody is shocked at them, because they understand them in an analogical sense. And if they would but allow predestination, election, decrees, purposes, and foreknowledge, to belong to God, with the same difference, they would no more think themselves obliged to charge those that ascribe them to him with blasphemy, in the one case, than in the other.

It is therefore incumbent on us to forbear all such deductions, and we should endeavour to reconcile these several representations together, by teaching the people, that God's knowledge is of another nature than ours;

and that though we cannot in our way of thinking certainly foresee what is free and contingent, yet God may do it by that power which answers to prescience in him, or rather in truth supplies the place of it: nor is it any wonder that we cannot conceive how this is done, since we have no direct or proper notion of God's knowledge; nor can we ever in this life expect to comprehend it, any more than a man who never saw, can expect to discern the shape and figure of bodies at a distance, whilst he continues blind.

§. 37. The fifth use we are to make of what has been said, is to teach us how we are to behave ourselves in a church, where either of these schemes is settled and taught as a doctrine: and here I think the resolution is easy; we ought to be quiet, and not unseasonably disturb the peace of the church; much less should we endeavour to expose what she professes, by alleging absurdities and inconsistencies in it. On the contrary, we are obliged to take pains to shew that the pretended consequences do not follow, as in truth they do not; and to discharge all that make them, as enemies of peace, and false accusers of their brethren, by charging them with consequences they disown, and that have no other foundation but the maker's ignorance.

For in truth, as has been already shewed, if such inferences be allowed, hardly any one attribute or operation of God, as ascribed in Scripture, will be free from the cavils of perverse men.

It is observable, that by the same way of reasoning, and by the same sort of arguments, by which some

endeavour to destroy the divine prescience, and render his decrees odious, Cotta long ago in Cicero attacked the other attributes, and undertook to prove that God can neither have reason nor understanding, wisdom nor prudence, nor any other virtue. And if we understand these literally and properly, so as to signify the same when applied to God and to men, it will not be easy to answer his arguments: but if we conceive them to be ascribed to him by proportion and analogy, that is, if we mean no more when we apply them to God, than that he has some powers and faculties, though not of the same nature, which are analogous to these advantages which these could give him if he had them, enabling him to produce all the good effects which we see consequent to them, when in the greatest perfection: then the arguments used by Cotta<sup>r</sup> against them have no manner of force; since we do not plead for such an understanding, reason, justice, and virtue, as he objects

<sup>r</sup> Qualem autem Deum intelligere nos possumus nulla virtute præditum? Quid enim? prudentiamne Deo tribuemus? Quæ constat ex scientia rerum bonarum et malarum, et, nec bonarum nec malarum? Cui mali nihil est, nec esse potest, quid huic opus est delectu bonorum et malorum? Quid autem ratione? quid intelligentia? quibus utimur ad eam rem ut apertis obscura assequamur. At obscurum Deo nihil potest esse. Nam Justitia, quæ suum cuique distribuit, quid pertinet ad Deos? hominum enim societas et communitas, ut vos dicitis, Justitiam procreavit: temperantia autem constat ex prætermittendis voluptatibus corporis; cui si locus in cœlo est, est etiam voluptatibus. Nam fortis Deus intelligi qui potest? in dolore, an in labore, an in periculo? quorum Deum nihil attingit. Nec ratione igitur utentem, nec virtute ulla præditum Deum intelligere qui possumus? *Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. §. 15.*

against, but for more valuable perfections that are more than equivalent, and in truth infinitely superior to them; though called by the same names, because we do not know what they are in themselves, but only see their effects in the world, which are such as might be expected from the most consummate reason, understanding, and virtue.

And after the same manner, when perverse men reason against the prescience, predestination, and the decrees of God, by drawing the like absurd consequences, as Cotta doth against the possibility of his being endowed with reason and understanding, &c. our answer is the same as before mentioned. If these be supposed the very same in all respects when attributed to God, as we find them in ourselves, there would be some colour, from the absurdities that would follow, to deny that they belong to God; but when we only ascribe them to him by analogy, and mean no more than that there are some things answerable to them, from whence, as principles, the divine operations proceed; it is plain, that all such arguments not only lose their force, but are absolutely impertinent.

It is therefore sufficient for the ministers of the Church to shew that the established doctrine is agreeable to Scripture, and teach their people what use ought to be made of it, and to caution them against the abuse; which if they do with prudence, they will avoid contentions and divisions, and prevent the mischiefs which are apt to follow the mistaken representations of it.

§. 38. This is the method taken by our Church in

her Seventeenth Article, where we are taught, that “predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation. And that the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, as well because it doth greatly establish their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love toward God. And yet we must receive God’s promises, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture.” Here you see the two schemes joined together: and we are allowed all the comfort that the consideration of our being predestinated can afford us: and at the same time we are given to understand, that the promises of God are generally conditional; and that notwithstanding our belief of predestination, we can have no hope of obtaining the benefit of them, but by fulfilling the conditions. And I hope I have explained them in such a way, as shews them to be consistent in themselves, and of great use towards making us holy here, and happy hereafter.



## APPENDIX.

---

### No. I.

#### ON THE VARIOUS USES OF THE WORD "NECESSITY," AND THOSE OF THE SAME CLASS.

---

Words are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools.

HOBBS.

---

THE utmost precision in the use of the word necessity, and others of a correspondent meaning, is of so much importance, in discussing that which is the main subject of Dr. King's discourse, and so much of the unsatisfactory and perplexed character of almost every argument on these points, (not excepting some parts even of Dr. King's,) may be traced up to undetected ambiguity in that quarter, that it appears worth while to explain more fully than could be done in a note, the various senses of these words<sup>a</sup>.

I. The idea of close *conjunction*,—intimate connexion—whether such be the primary sense of the word "necessary" and its derivatives, or not, seems to be at least the notion

<sup>a</sup> See Articles "Impossibility" and "Necessary," in Appendix to Elements of Logic.

most generally conveyed by them, and to be mixed up, as it were, with all the different uses of them. Not to advert to the employment of the Latin words “*necessarius*” and “*necessitudo*,” in reference to close intimacy, the notion of inseparable conjunction seems to pervade, more or less, the various shades of meaning of the words in question. Hence, food is called “*necessary*” to life, because of the connexion between the two; life never continues *without*, that is, *separately*, from food. And on the same principle we speak of the “*necessity*” of a *cause* to its *effect*<sup>b</sup>. Death again is a matter of “*necessity*” to man, because no man continues exempt from it. The truth of a conclusion follows “*necessarily*” from the premises, because their truth does not exist *separately* from that of the conclusion<sup>c</sup>; they are never found to be true without its being true also.

It being a *constant* connexion that is expressed by “*necessary*,” the word is commonly used, in *general assertions*, as nearly equivalent to “*universal*,” and “*not-necessary*,” to occasional. For instance, A rupture of the spinal marrow “*necessarily*” occasions death: (that is, in *all* cases;) The

<sup>b</sup> That we are unable to perceive any *efficacy* in what are called “*physical causes*,” to produce their respective effects, and that all we do perceive (and consequently all we really indicate, in these cases, by the word causation) is a constant *conjunction*—a connexion in point of time and place, is the doctrine not of Hume alone, (who has deduced illogical and mischievous conclusions from it,) but also of Barrow, and Butler, as well as D. Stewart.

<sup>c</sup> In this case “*necessity*” is opposed to a *contradiction* and absurdity; in the former instances, to a *violation of the order of nature*.

There are several modifications of meaning comprehended under this first head, of which I am now speaking; but there is no need to enter into any full discussion of these beyond what concerns the main object proposed.



inhabitants of hot countries are not necessarily negroes ; (that is, not *universally*.) In this way, “ necessary,” and “ not-necessary,” may, with propriety, be applied to any *class* of things, in any *general* proposition. But neither of them can be thus applied to *individual* events ; the assertions respecting which, being what logicians call *singular* propositions, cannot be *more or less general*, nor, consequently, can need or admit of any such limitation, as is expressed by “ not-necessary.” It would be perfectly unmeaning to say of any “ singular” proposition, (for instance, the existence of the Breakwater at Plymouth,) that it is true *without any exception*, or that it *admits of exception*. The words “ necessary” and “ not-necessary” therefore, when applied to individual cases, must (if not wholly unmeaning) be employed with some different view : thus we say, “ the Breakwater is ‘ necessary,’ ” namely, “ to the security of the harbour.”

II. Our *attention* being most *called* to the connexion of such things as we may in vain wish or endeavour to separate, the word “ necessary” hence comes to be sometimes *limited*, and *especially* applied, to cases of *compulsion* ;—to events which take place either against one’s will, or, at least, independent of it,—to things, in short, which we have no *power* to prevent if we would, or to prevent, without submitting to a worse alternative<sup>d</sup>. Hence we speak more especially of the necessity of death, because all animals *avoid* it as long as they are able ; and of the necessity of throwing over goods in a storm, because it is what we are averse to in itself, and though we might refuse to do it, we could not, without incurring shipwreck. In this sense it is that necessity is

<sup>d</sup> Hence ἀναγκάϊον, which is literally “ necessary,” is often so used as to be nearly equivalent to “ unpleasant,” or “ disadvantageous.”

pleaded, and allowed, as an *excuse* for doing what would otherwise be blameable. But in the primitive and wider sense of the word, it may be applied to cases where there is no *compulsion*, nor opposition to the will. For the close connexion, above spoken of, exists between the will of any agent and that which is conformable to his will. Thus, foreign luxuries are “necessary” for *gratification*, to him who delights in them: and the word is often thus employed; only that, in this case, it is proper, in order to avoid mistake, to state *for what* they are necessary: they are not called simply or *absolutely* “necessary<sup>e</sup>,” (which would imply that they were so in the secondary and more limited sense, which has been last mentioned, that is, independently of our will and choice,) but “necessary *for so and so*.”

Thus also we say, that whatever is willed by an omnipotent Being, “necessarily” takes place: not meaning that he is under *compulsion*, but merely that there is an universal connexion between the *power* to obtain the fulfilment of one’s will, and the actual fulfilment of it.

From confounding together the primary and wider sense of “necessity,” and that secondary and more limited sense, which implies compulsion or unwillingness, have arisen most of the disputes and perplexities that have prevailed on this subject <sup>f</sup>. Thus, Dr. Paley says, “in our apprehension, to

<sup>e</sup> “Absolutely” and “absolute” are often, by colloquial inaccuracy, added, without any precise meaning, to the words necessary and necessity.

<sup>f</sup> If any one would see a specimen of the degree to which an intelligent writer may be bewildered, by not attending to the ambiguity of words, and by mistaking them for things, he will find a remarkable one (among many others) in a note by Law, the ingenious editor of Dr. King; (chap. v. § 1. subs. 5, note *s*.) in which “certain” and “infallible” being

be under a necessity of acting according to any rule, is inconsistent with free agency; and it makes no difference which we can understand, whether the necessity be internal or external, or that the rule is the rule of perfect rectitude<sup>ε</sup>."

It will be seen from what has been said, that I have regarded all necessity as *conditional*; that is, as implying always the connexion of one thing with another; so that whatever is said to be "necessary," is so called in consideration of something else: and this, I apprehend, is always the sense conveyed by the word, even when those who employ it are not distinctly aware of this; and hence springs much of the prevailing confusion of thought. Mr. D. Stewart has pointed out, what certainly men were not generally aware of before, that the "necessity" of mathematical truths is merely *conformity to the hypothesis*, viz. to the definitions. For instance, that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, may be spoken of in lofty language as an independent, eternal, self-existent, "necessary" truth; but this necessity is in fact merely the connexion between the *definition of a triangle* and the equality in question. So, the existence of the Deity is called "necessary;" an expression which, when it conveys any distinct idea at all, (which is not always the case with those who employ it,) signifies merely the connexion between the existing universe, and a Being who is the Author of it; the former idea is always, in a rational mind, accompanied by the latter.

regarded as properties of events themselves, (which is as if we were to consider "visible" and "invisible" as intrinsic properties of eclipses,) are supposed to be inconsistent with freedom; and the words "may," "must," &c. being used without any steady attention to their ambiguity, the whole is involved in inextricable confusion.

<sup>ε</sup> Moral Philosophy, B. v. c. ii. p. 40, 41.

III. There is also another use of the word "necessary" and of those connected with it: for, as it has been above remarked that our *attention* is especially *called* to those connexions which we may vainly endeavour *to destroy*, so our attention is likewise particularly called to those connexions which we *understand*, or at least are *aware of*<sup>h</sup>. And since of two things connected together, if the one which is the hypothesis or antecedent be given, the consequent is also given, it follows that *we know*, or are *certain* of, the consequent, when we know the hypothesis. And hence arises the confusion of *certainty* with "necessity;" the former of which belongs properly to our own *minds*, and is thence, in a transferred sense, applied to the *objects* themselves. When we know, first, the connexion between two things, (which is, properly, necessity,) and, secondly, the *existence* of one of them, we thence come to know "certainly," that is, without any room for doubt, the existence of the other; which we sometimes therefore call "certain," sometimes "necessary." For instance, we say, such a district is "necessarily," or is "certainly," overflowed; because *we* are certain, first, that such a river has risen so many feet, and, secondly, that that rise is connected with the overflowing of the district in question.

Being thus accustomed to apply to those things especially the word "necessary," which we *know* to be connected with

<sup>h</sup> As "necessary" in the sense just above noticed is opposed to "voluntary," so in the sense I am now speaking of it is opposed to "accidental" or "contingent;" words which, as has been formerly remarked, do not denote any quality in events themselves, but only the relation in which they stand to *our knowledge*. Neither of these two senses is, properly speaking, opposed to the primary sense of "necessary," but rather they are *limitations* of it.

and dependent on such others as we know to exist, we thus come to fancy a sort of coincidence between "necessity" and "knowledge." For instance, we say that a loaded die *must necessarily* turn up one particular side; but that an unloaded one does not necessarily fall on one side rather than another. The one die therefore has turned up, suppose, a six, necessarily; the other, *accidentally*.

In reality however, the only difference (as far as concerns the present question) is *relative to our knowledge*: the fall of the latter die being connected with, and dependent on, the various impulses it received in the box, &c. as much as that of the other, with the gravitation of the weight it was loaded with; only the operation of the one influence was, or might be, *known* to us; the other could not. Let it be borne in mind therefore, that when we say the cast of this die was not necessary, we only mean in fact (if we attach any precise meaning to our words) that we do not know *why* it was necessary; that is, do not fully know the operation of the causes which produced it. For scarcely any one would say it happened without any cause at all. And should he explain his meaning in calling it accidental, to be, that *if* the box had been shaken in some other way, the cast might have been different; the answer is, that, on that principle, the other is not to be called necessary either; since *if* the other die had not been loaded, or had been loaded differently, the cast of that also would have been different. In neither case could the result have been other than it was, *supposing all the circumstances connected with it to remain the same*.

When indeed we speak of events in which man's agency is concerned, as not necessary, and say that they *might* have happened otherwise, we sometimes mean that the agent acted

not from *compulsion*, but willingly, and had it in his *power* to act otherwise; sometimes again, we mean, that we do not know, or did not know beforehand, what the compulsion was, or under what inducements he acted.

The word "necessary" then is used, I. Sometimes to denote the universality or constancy of the connexion between any two things, and consequently, in any *general* assertion, to imply merely that what we say is true without any exception or qualification: II. Sometimes to denote *compulsion*, or independence of our will: and III. Sometimes to denote our *knowledge* respecting the matter in question, and our having no room for *doubt* about it.

What has been said may serve as a clew to explain the confused notions of many of the advocates for what is called the system of necessity: and, I may add, of many of its opponents also. "If God foresees our actions," it is said, "they are necessary;" and if they are "necessary," we are not "free." Now in this second clause the word "necessary" is transferred to the secondary sense of "compulsory" or "involuntary;" whereas the "necessity" (if we choose to call it so) which is implied by the event's being *foreknown*, only means, if we employ the phrase with any kind of precision, the correspondence of that event to that knowledge<sup>1</sup>;—its being such as it is known to be; so that "necessary," is here, merely equivalent to "real," in opposition to "ideal" or "imaginary." If, in any case, it *depends on us*<sup>k</sup> to do, or to abstain from doing, any thing, and we have a decided

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Copleston's first Disc. p. 6, 7.

<sup>k</sup> The Greek expressions ἐφ' ἡμῶν and οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν are more precise than those commonly employed in our language. Vide Arist. Eth. Nicom. b. 3.

inclination—a predominant will, to do it, then it is (in the primary sense of the word) a “necessary” consequence that we do it. And whoever *knows* that we have this power and this will, knows that we shall do so. This knowledge implies necessity in one sense, but not in the other; it implies the connexion between the cause and the effect—between our power united with will, and a certain action; but not, any compulsion and opposition to our will.

But if it be *impossible* for me to act otherwise than I do, which it is, if God foreknows my action, how can I be “free?” This is but the very same fallacy, in another form of expression; for “impossible” and “necessary” correspond throughout all their senses, and are constantly opposed: and as “necessary” is sometimes employed to denote compulsion to do any thing, so is “impossible,” to denote *restraint* or *absence of power* to do it; which last indeed seems to be the original meaning of impossible. But “impossible” is also often used so as to correspond with another sense of the word “necessary,” to imply merely the absence of all room for *doubt*, or (as we often express it) of all “chance” and “contingency.” For instance, we say, “such an one, since he possesses the utmost courage, will necessarily stand to his post;” or it is “*impossible* he should fly:” not meaning that he is under any *restraint*; so far from it, the very ground of our pronouncing it impossible for him to fly, is our knowledge that it depends on him to do which he pleases, and our knowing at the same time from his character, that he has no such inclination.

If then this be all that is meant when one speaks of the “impossibility” of a man’s acting otherwise than he does, it

is plain that it does not at all infringe on liberty ; since it is evidently possible in the *other* sense, for instance, for the brave man to run away ; that is, he has the *power* to do so, and may *if he chooses* ; according to this sense of the word, therefore, we admit the position, but deny the inference. But if on the other hand it be meant that the divine prescience implies impossibility in the other sense, that is, implies that it is not in our *power* in any case to do either this or that, according to our choice, the answer is to deny the position ; which rests, in fact, on the fallacy of ambiguity, and which contradicts the evidence of each man's consciousness.

Those who wish for a more full exposition of this ambiguity, and of the perplexities and confusion of thought which have arisen from overlooking it, may find the subject copiously and clearly treated in Tucker's "Light of Nature," chap. 26. But Dr. Copleston has condensed, with his usual perspicuous conciseness, nearly the very same explanation into the compass of a single page : " <sup>1</sup> Another important example of the same kind is in the use of the words *possible*, and *impossible*. These are equally ambiguous with the others, as being applied sometimes to events themselves, and sometimes used with reference to our conceptions of them—but of these it is observable that their *primary* and proper application is to events, their *secondary* and improper to the human mind. Thus we say that a thing is possible to a man who has the *power* of doing it—and that is properly *impossible* which no power we are acquainted with can effect. But the words are also continually used to express *our sense* of the chance there is that a thing will be done. When we mean to express our firm conviction that a thing will not happen,

<sup>1</sup> Copleston, p. 81, 82.



although there are *powers* in nature competent to produce it, we call it impossible, in direct opposition to those things which we are convinced *will* happen, and which we call certain. And thus there are many things which in one sense are *possible*, that is, within the compass of human agency, which again according to our conviction are absolutely *impossible*."

The same ambiguity which attends the words possible and impossible, belongs also to "may," "must," "can," and all words of that family: that is, they are sometimes employed when we are speaking of the power, or "want of power," to produce any effect, and sometimes, on the other hand, when we mean to express the constant or occasional "connexion" of any two things, or *our* certainty or uncertainty respecting that connexion<sup>m</sup>. For instance, in the former sense we say "the King '*may*' pardon all criminals;" i. e. it is in his *power*: and that "he '*must*' submit to sickness and death, like other men;" i. e. it is out of his power to escape them. In the latter sense, we say, that "either of two contending armies *may* be victorious;" and that he who is fainting with thirst in a desert and has no reason for abstaining, *must* eagerly drink when he comes to a spring: i. e. *we* are *doubtful* in the one case, and have no doubt in the other. Now these being the very words commonly employed by writers to explain their meaning when there is any perplexity respecting the use of "possible" and "impossible," and yet being themselves liable to the very same ambiguity, it thus often happens that the confusion is increased by the very means used to clear it up. And this very confusion is often mistaken by the writers themselves for a sign of the profundity of their own speculations; they fancy the stream deep, because

<sup>m</sup> See Essay III. § 4. Second Series.

it is not clear ; and not aware that they are bewildered in idle logomachies, exult in their own ingenuity, which is apparently developing important mysteries. Dr. Copleston accordingly expresses a very well grounded “ apprehension”, of incurring the displeasure of those who, if my speculations are well-founded, will appear to have lost their time in logomachy, and to have wasted their strength in endeavouring to grasp a phantom, or in fighting the air<sup>o</sup>.”

The arguments and systems which have been thus reared, remind one of the fog-banks, which at sea so often delude the anxious mariner ; he fancies himself within view of new coasts, with promontories, and bays, and mountains distinctly discernible ; but a nearer approach, and a more steady observation, prove the whole to be but an unsubstantial vapour, ready to melt away into air, and vanish for ever.

And let it not be thought that when we have once clearly perceived and explained the ambiguity of any term, we are thenceforth safe from its influence : far otherwise : it is not without long and habitual attention to its different meanings, and assiduous vigilance in the use of it, that we can counteract the ever besetting tendency to mistake, as Hobbes would say, the “ counters ” for the “ money,”—the *word* for the *thing* ; and to fancy, while we are sliding insensibly from one meaning into another, that we are still speaking of the same thing, because we are employing the same sound.

But some may say, “ have I the power of choosing among several motives, at once present to my mind ? or *must* I *obey* the strongest ? for if so, how can I enjoy free-will ? ” Here

<sup>n</sup> An apprehension which experience has, since, abundantly confirmed.

<sup>o</sup> Preface, p. xvi.

again is an entanglement in ambiguous words : “ must,” and “ obey,” and “ strongest,” suggest the idea (which belongs to them in their primary sense) of *compulsion*, and of *one person* submitting to *another* ; whereas here, they are only used *figuratively* ; the terms “ weak ” and “ strong,” when applied to motives, denoting nothing but their less or greater tendency to prevail (that is, to *operate, and take effect*) in practice ; so that to say, “ the stronger motive prevails,” is only another form of saying, “ that which prevails, prevails.” “ Must,” again, denotes, here, no *compulsion*, but only, that it would be unmeaning and contradictory to call that the weaker motive, which (singly) prevails over another. And “ obey ” is used analogously only, to denote the conformity of the action to the will ; which *corresponds* to the conformity of a servant to his master’s directions.

We should recollect that when we speak of “ inclinations,” “ motives,” “ will,” “ reason,” “ thoughts,” &c. *operating* on the *mind*, we are not literally stating the fact ; (as Locke seems to have imagined, in his system of ideas ; which is in truth a metaphysical theory built on a figure of speech ; ) for all these are not *distinct things existing in the mind*, but states or conditions of the mind itself. So that it would be more correct, in philosophical discourses, to speak (as Dr. Beattie recommends) of “ the mind desiring,” “ the mind willing,” “ the mind thinking,” &c. than of “ desires,” “ will,” “ ideas,” &c. Now *compulsion* or *coercion*, in the literal sense, always implies *two agents* ; whereas the mind, if we consider rightly, is but *one*. It is only by a metaphor that we are said to “ compel ourselves,” or to be “ restrained by ourselves <sup>P</sup>.”

<sup>P</sup> This is illustrated in some degree by the varied use of “ shall ” and “ will,” according to the *person* in which they are employed. The prac-

A man will often say indeed that he "*cannot help* doing so and so, though he knows it is wrong:" but this is a figurative expression; and it is of great importance in practice, steadily to bear in mind that it is so. For no man is blamed or punished (nor could be, to any purpose) for doing what he, literally, cannot help; whereas, when he follows his inclination in doing what he knows to be wrong, the common sense of all mankind has decided, and proved by experience, that he is a proper subject of punishment. *That* "necessity" can alone be pleaded as a justification, in which a man acts *against* his will.

In fact, there is no set of terms more ambiguous than "self," and the other equivalent expressions: for instance, if I say that such a one "was afflicted with long illness—that he died—that he was buried in such a spot—and that I trust he is in a happy state," I speak of him in this one short passage in three different senses; namely, as the body alone, as the soul alone, and as the compound of the two. And moreover when we are speaking of the spiritual part, mind or soul, alone, we often reckon one of (what are called) the parts of this mind, as more especially a man's "self" than the rest; namely, the "reason" or "conscience." For instance, we say, "this man (meaning his reason) has overcome his passions," or "is overcome by his passions:" never, that he "has overcome his reason," or, "is overcome by his reason." Yet on the other hand, we do sometimes say, that "he has stifled his conscience," or is "overcome by conscience." Let it however be steadily kept in mind, that all

tical mode (generally speaking) of conjugating them is, as has often been remarked, "I will, thou shalt, he shall," and "I shall, thou wilt, he will." See however the note on the words "will" and "shall," p. 476, 477.

these are but *figurative* expressions<sup>1</sup>; for we have no ground for supposing that any of these are literally parts of the mind, or things existing in it, but only states, and, as it were, *postures*, of the mind itself.

For a man to complain then that he is not free because his conduct is conformable to his own character, and because he cannot voluntarily act against his own inclination, is (as Tucker remarks) the same absurdity as to "complain that he cannot walk without walking, or sit still without sitting still." He may lament indeed that his inclinations are not more virtuous,—his disposition better *constituted*; and may be unable to comprehend how he should be responsible to the Author of his being<sup>2</sup>. And if he is practically sensible of the frailty of his nature, he may have the wisdom to apply

<sup>1</sup> The absurd theory of Realism, which attributes an independent real existence to genera and species, seems to have sprung from the undue influence on our thoughts, of this kind of language: "When any general idea," they said, "as, for instance, that of a triangle, is present to a multitude of different minds at once, there must surely be some *real thing* which all these minds are acting on." The answer is, that when two men are said to have the same "idea" in their minds, the true meaning of this expression is, that they are *both thinking alike*: just as when several men are said to be *in one* and the same bodily posture, this only means that they are all *placed alike*.—See *Elements of Logic*, B. IV. ch. v. § 1.

<sup>2</sup> Or he may perhaps boldly and impiously complain of his Maker, if he be in the temper of mind in which Adam after the fall is represented by Milton:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay  
To mould me man? did I solicit thee  
From darkness to promote me, or here place  
In this delicious garden? As my will  
Concurred not to my being, it were but right,  
And equal, to reduce me to my dust.

for the sanctifying grace of God's Holy Spirit, instead of perplexing himself with an insuperable difficulty. But this difficulty, however great, belongs not to the present question: the complaint cannot, without an abuse of language, be made of a *want of freedom*; since that want consists, according to the common sense of mankind, not in *following* our inclination, but in acting *against* it. If this principle be once given up, there is no stopping short of the most absurd results. For instance, I remember an ingenious disputant being driven, in this way, to the conclusion, that "that Being could alone be free, who should be the *voluntary author* of his own *first* will:" this he could not deny to be a palpable contradiction in terms: so that it would follow, that the words "voluntary" and "free," and the corresponding terms in all languages, which have been employed by all men in every age, have no meaning whatever!

Let us not then be driven by any such metaphysical quibbles, to give up the plain, broad, and practical distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions; a distinction on which the whole conduct of life must rest, because it alone leaves an opening for the influence of admonition, exhortation, threats, promises, examples, &c.

If a man is likely to meet with any good or evil, in consequence of his being tall or short,—his being born a Negro or a White, &c. his knowing this beforehand can make *no difference in the result*: if, on the contrary, he is likely to meet with any advantage or disadvantage in consequence of his being diligent or idle,—virtuous or vicious,—his knowledge of this *will* be likely to affect the result. This grand distinction, which is obvious to a child, is precisely all that we want for every practical purpose.

Let then necessarians, of all descriptions, but step forth into the light, and explain their own meaning; and we shall find that their positions are either obviously untenable, or else perfectly harmless, and nearly insignificant. If, in saying that all things are fixed and necessary, they mean that there is no such thing as voluntary action, we may appeal from the verbal quibbles, which alone afford a seeming support to such a doctrine, to universal consciousness; which will authorize even those, who have never entered into such speculations as the foregoing, to decide on the falsity of the conclusion, though they are perplexed with the subtle fallacies of the argument.

But if nothing more be meant than that every event depends on causes adequate to produce it, — that nothing is in itself *contingent, accidental, or uncertain*, but is called so only with reference to a person who does not *know* all the circumstances on which it depends; — and that it is absurd to say any thing could have happened otherwise than it did, *supposing all the circumstances connected with it to remain the same*; then the doctrine is undeniably true, but perfectly harmless; not at all encroaching on free-agency and responsibility; and amounting in fact to little more than an expansion of the axiom, that “it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.”

When however I say that the doctrine is harmless, I mean, only to those who can keep their minds stedfastly fixed on this its true interpretation. For it is very liable to be misapprehended; and the errors thus produced are most mischievous. The generality of men, if told that any thing takes place necessarily, and could not have been otherwise, will be apt to consider this necessity as independent of the very circumstances which give rise to it; and to lose sight of the equal necessity of these. Thus it is that Mahomet seems to have

taught predestination to his followers ; and in this sense, it appears, on some occasions they practically adhere to it ; as, for instance, in neglecting to take precautions against the plague. Thus also the vulgar among us will be apt to say, “ If God foresees I shall be saved, I shall be saved, live how I may ; if, that I shall not be saved, nothing I can do will avail.” It might as well be said, “ I need not trouble myself to procure food ; since if God foresees that I shall be starved, my efforts will not prevent it ; and if He foresees that I shall not, my negligence cannot bring it to pass.” In the common affairs of life indeed no one ordinarily acts on such an absurd principle : but in any case connected with religion, though precisely parallel, men often lay aside the common sense which guides them in other matters. They will often be unable to perceive that there is just the same connexion between the conditions and the end, — between our own efforts and our salvation, as there would have been, had *no* Being existed who could *foresee* either. It is better therefore to speak of their salvation as *contingent* ; which is no deceit,—since in fact it is so, in the only sense in which any *thing* can be contingent ; that is, *we* are ignorant respecting our final doom, except so far that we know it rests with each man to accept the offers made him, or to reject them ; and that each will fare accordingly.

Nor would I say that it is expedient for any one, even of those who do *not* mistake the doctrine in question, to dwell very much, habitually, and exclusively, on this view of the Divine omniscience. A mind that is chiefly devoted to such thoughts, is likely to lose its practical energies. We shall be going too far if we maintain, without any limitation, the maxim, that the knowledge of whatever is true can be no



impediment, but rather an aid, to practice. This holds, in those truths only whose nature we can fully comprehend ; understanding also the whole system of which they are a part. The contemplation of any truth that is *partially*, or that is *indistinctly*, known, may prove even detrimental in practice. For instance, if a clown could be brought to believe that the *sun stands still*, without being also taught that the *earth moves*, he would, by the contemplation of this truth, be far more perplexed than before, since the vicissitudes of day and night would be quite at variance with his scanty theoretical knowledge. In like manner, to contemplate very diligently and habitually, the truth, that God has no passions—cannot, literally, feel pity for our sufferings, or take delight in any glory we can bestow—cannot suffer any pain from our misconduct, or be dependent for enjoyment and gratification on our praise and obedience—on many persons at least, might have an effect rather hurtful than salutary ; not because the doctrine is not true, or ought not to be *believed* ; but because it relates to so incomprehensible a subject, that it affords but a partial glimpse of the truth. In fact, though the Deity cannot have these passions, there must be something else in Him corresponding to them, and working analogous effects ; and what that something is, we are not capable, in our present state at least, of fully comprehending : and till we *are* thus capable, to dwell very much on this partial and imperfect view of the subject may be inexpedient.

It were to be wished that Calvinistic writers would universally keep this principle in mind ; which it must be acknowledged many of them have done, with most laudable caution ; for which very caution, however, they have, in many instances, incurred censure.

And here it may be worth while to remark, that, in incul-

cating the duty of humility, there is an important distinction to be observed between two different offices of it, or, as some would express it, two different kinds of humility, which are not always found in the same person. The one consists in forming a modest estimate of one's own *individual* powers and worth, compared with that of the rest of mankind; the other, in not overrating the *human* faculties—in estimating, as humbly as we ought, the powers and capacities of *man in general*. Now there are many who observe one of these rules, but violate the other: partly perhaps from not attending to the difference between them. A man may be entirely free from *personal* arrogance—from all undue pretensions to superiority over others—and may, so far, be justly regarded as a modest and humble-minded man;—and yet may err most grievously in exercising his faculties on subjects which lie out of their reach; reasoning and dogmatizing on things beyond reason, and presumptuously prying into the mysteries of the Most High: thus nullifying, in fact, the *duty* of faith, so much insisted on in Scripture: for, doctrines which can be not only proved, but also fully comprehended and clearly explained, there would be no great virtue in believing<sup>s</sup>. Now such a man would not be at all checked in this fault by any admonitions against despising others, and overrating himself in comparison of them. On the other hand, a man may be personally arrogant, and yet form a just and modest estimate of the human powers<sup>t</sup>.

On the whole, it may safely be asserted, that the two chief sources of error in theological and metaphysical discussions, are, *presumptuous speculation* on mysterious subjects, and inattention to the *ambiguities of language*.

<sup>s</sup> See Appendix, No. II.

<sup>t</sup> This appears to have been the case with Warburton.

## No. II.

## ON DR. KING'S TREATISE OF THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

---

Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat.

*Gen. ii. 17.*

---

THE very high terms in which I have spoken of Dr. King, and indeed the very circumstance of republishing this discourse, may seem to call for some notice of his larger work, on the Origin of Evil, by which indeed he is much better known. It may be expected, as that is so nearly connected in many points with the present work, if it be not republished at the same time, that either some analysis of the argument should be given, or at least some reason assigned for omitting it.

The fact is, that I cannot form the same high judgment of that work as of the one before us; nor can admit that he has accomplished the object proposed. That there is much ingenuity displayed in the conduct of that argument, and also a candid disposition, is undeniable, and is indeed what every one would confidently expect, who has perused the present discourse. But a treatise of that description, like an algebraical calculation, does not admit of many different degrees of value: if there be some such fundamental flaw in the

argument as vitiates the whole system, the intrinsic worth of the materials is but trifling, when the edifice they belong to is overthrown.

Now in the opinion of the ablest and most candid judges, the origin of evil is a mystery still unexplained, and which most of them (I may add) think will ever remain so, to such creatures as we now are<sup>a</sup>. To the authority of all these therefore I may appeal in support of my assertion, that there must be some flaw in the argument which professes to explain it. Mr. D. Stewart indeed acquiesces in the same mode of explanation as that adopted by Archbishop King, with the air of one who thinks it too obvious and easy to need much argument<sup>b</sup>. "The question," he says, "how comes evil to exist?" resolves itself into this, "why was man made a free agent?" but he will not, I fear, find many, of even half his own depth of thought and sagacity, who will be so easily satisfied.

Dr. King's argument is substantially the same; though he considers it as requiring an elaborate train of reasoning.

<sup>a</sup> "That *evil* exists, and that God is not the author of it, although the author of every thing else, undoubtedly carries with it as great a difficulty as the other question we were considering."—*Copleston's Discourses*, p. 93.

"The only solution of this difficulty I apprehend must be taken from the imperfection of our understanding; for we have observed in a former place, that infinite goodness and infinite power, considered in the abstract, seem incompatible: which shews there is something wrong in our conceptions, and that we are not competent judges of what belongs, and what is repugnant, to goodness. But God knows though we do not, and is good and righteous in all his ways; therefore whatever method he pursues is an evidence of its rectitude beyond all other evidences that can offer to us for the contrary.—*Tucker's Light of Nature*, c. xxvi. p. 237.

<sup>b</sup> See Stewart's *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, Part II. c. ii. § 1. art. 2. p. 295—299.

He endeavours to establish as the basis of his system, as far as regards moral evil, (what the majority probably would be disposed to admit,) that a greater sum of good is produced by the creation of agents acting freely and by their own will and choice, than could be, if none such existed. This being granted, he proceeds to argue that Beings who have this free choice, (at least created, and consequently imperfect beings,) must needs be *liable to do wrong*: we need not therefore be surprised, under such circumstances, at the existence of sin; and moral evil being thus admitted, there would remain, to most minds, no difficulty in comprehending the existence of any other kind of evil. This I conceive to be (though I have not adhered to his arrangement) a fair account of the real sum and substance of the whole argument; several other expressions, which are introduced in the course of it, being in reality merely equivalent to that one, of “liable to sin.”

Considering the eminent candour and good intention of the writer, the importance of the object he had in view, and, I may add, the satisfactoriness of his argument to many minds, it is not without sincere regret that I am compelled to state my conviction, that the whole argument rests on the use made (undesignedly I have no doubt) of ambiguous words. Truth however is not only intrinsically valuable, but is always, in the long run, expedient. That the detection of the fallacy which runs through this argument should be likely to lead some to a disgust for the religion itself, which they fancy to depend upon it, is what I should be inclined antecedently to conjecture, even if I had not happened to know by experience that such has been the fact.

The fallacy lies in the expression “*liable to sin*,” and there is a corresponding ambiguity in the words “must,” “possible,”

“ impossible,” “ contingent,” &c. which are brought in to explain it ; a circumstance which involves those who have overlooked the ambiguity in the first instance, in continually increased confusion the further they advance.

What this ambiguity is, I have already endeavoured to explain in the dissertation on the word “ necessity.” When it is said, that, for an agent to be free, and act according to his own choice, it must be “ *possible*” for him to act wrong, and that therefore he must be “ *liable*” to sin, &c. this is undoubtedly true, if understood to signify merely that he is left at full *liberty* to do what he chooses—that it must be in his *power* (and in that *sense*, *possible*) to do right or wrong,—and that it must depend on himself, not on any external *compulsion*, how he shall act : but then this, I fear, does not explain the difficulty ; which is, not why men should have the power, but why they should have the will, to do wrong, and why they actually do it.

But if when it is said that a free agent must be “ liable to sin,” it is meant that he must be such as may actually be expected to do so <sup>c</sup>, this would indeed, if admitted, solve the difficulty ; but it is in fact begging the question : nor is there any ground (in our present state of knowledge) for admitting it. We can conceive a free-agent, not indeed destitute of the *power* to sin, but destitute of the inclination, or having a stronger inclination to do right ; and, for such a Being, it would be in one sense possible, and in the other sense not possible, that he should do wrong. The whole argument in fact turns on this ambiguous use of the word “ possible,” and of those related to it.

<sup>c</sup> Οἷος ποιεῖν, as it is more precisely expressed by the Greek Philosophers.

<sup>d</sup> But then, it is said, "must not a created, and consequently *imperfect* Being be liable to sin, if left free?" The word "imperfect," again, is no less ambiguous. If it be understood to mean *faulty*, *sinful*, and *frail*, the proposition is identical; but if by an imperfect Being is meant merely one who has not the highest conceivable excellence of intellectual faculties—whose knowledge and whose power are limited, and who is subject to pain, &c. it does not appear how such imperfections are inconsistent with faultless morality. In fact, even in the world as it is, we do not find that those whose intellect is the highest, and who, in that sense, are the nearest to perfection, are always the most virtuous. Many men of very moderate capacity come often much nearer to perfection in the performance of their duties.

That the *power* to do any thing does not imply that it may be expected actually to take place, and that consequently the power to do wrong, which a free Being is implied to have, does not explain the actual existence of that wrong, is evident, if we either reflect on the difference of the senses in which "possible" is used, or if we look around us at what is actually passing. For instance, are not mankind at full liberty, if they choose it, to quit their houses and clothing, and to crawl about among the brutes, and feed on the grass of the field? Surely it is in that sense "possible" for them to do so; that is, it depends on them<sup>e</sup> whether they will do this or not: but does any one therefore expect that they will? On the contrary, every one would pronounce it to be "impossible;" that is, what can never rationally be looked for;

<sup>d</sup> See c. v. § v. subsect. ii. ¶ 14. of Dr. King's Origin of Evil.

<sup>e</sup> 'Εφ' ἑμὶν.

because, though men have it in their power, they have no such disposition: they are not restrained by any compulsion, from acting thus, but only, by their internal conviction of the absurdity of it: and no one holds himself the less free, on account of his rejecting that absurdity. Now if we consider that sin is in truth a much greater absurdity, it is, as far as we can judge, conceivable (though it is but too much unlike what we are used to see,) that a Being perfectly free might perceive as strongly *this* absurdity, and act as constantly on that perception, as men now perceive, and avoid, the absurdity of living like brutes.

If it be said that such a Being would not be in a state of trial, we should remember that Man cannot be, literally, tried by his Maker, (since trial, in the literal sense, always implies that he who makes the trial does not know the result :) but according to the principle so admirably laid down in Dr. King's sermon, that we are said by analogy to be in a state of trial, because *as* a master who is making trial of his servant, how he will perform his duty, *rewards* him if he does well, and *punishes* him if he does ill; so we may expect to be rewarded or punished according as we choose to act well or ill, just as we should, if God were really doubtful how we should act <sup>f</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> It may perhaps be worth while to observe, that the word trial is employed in two senses; namely, with reference to the *future*, and to the *past*: we *make trial*, for instance, of a servant, to see what his conduct *will* be; (in this sense the word "*prove*" is more commonly used by our Bible-translators than "try;") and we *bring to trial* one of whom we would ascertain what his conduct *has* been. These two senses are perhaps sometimes confounded together, in our application of the word to God's dealings with mankind. It is a matter however of no practical consequence, provided we remember, that *analogically* the word may be thus so applied in both senses, but *literally*, in neither; since both senses imply *uncertainty* in the person who makes the trial.



This analogous sense is the only one in which we can be said to be in a state of trial; and in that sense, such a Being as I have supposed may be conceived to be no less in a state of trial. Nay, he might even be exposed to temptation; that is, might have some inclinations, which if gratified indiscriminately, and uncontrolled by reason, would lead to evil; but which his reason would always be strong enough so to control: just as a kind mother, (indeed almost every mother,) may be confidently expected, if she has but a scanty portion of food, to impart a portion of it to her child, though she not only has the power to let it starve, by attending only to her own supply, but also is solicited by hunger to do so.

In fact, there actually have been, and are, we trust, many, whose lives have been such, not indeed as to merit salvation, but to permit and ensure their attainment of it according to God's promises: though we cannot suppose but that these persons were exposed to temptations, and tried, in the only sense in which a creature can be understood to be tried by his omniscient Creator.

But should it be said, that if the Deity should cause all those to die in infancy who, He foresaw, would, if they grew up, abuse their freedom, and lead a sinful life, and if consequently the world were stocked with Beings exempted, (though not by compulsion and restraint, yet by the strength of their reason and purity of their nature,) from all chance of sin, there would then be no room for the practice of what we now call virtue; this is most undeniably true, and ought studiously to be borne in mind. This truth cannot be better expressed than in the words of Dr. Copleston, which I will take the liberty of citing: "As without the presence of danger it is not easy to conceive any proof of courage, or of

temperance without lust, or of obedience without temptation to *do* wrong, so there is no room for the exercise of forbearance, forgiveness, and generosity, without *suffering* wrong. Without pain and privation there can be no patience—without distress in others, no sympathy in ourselves—no occasion for pity, for relief, for succour, for consolation, for any of those acts of love and charity, which are perhaps the most efficacious towards our own improvement, and towards fitting us for the enjoyment of a higher state of being<sup>g</sup>.” And we had much better stop here, than attempt to pry any further into the inscrutable plans of the Deity. That it was impossible for man to be so constituted as to attain the highest happiness without this kind of moral discipline, I most firmly and reverently believe, simply because God *has* ordained things as they are, not because I can perceive *why* it was impossible. That any such sinless Being as I have above supposed, actually exists, or can possibly exist, I am far from asserting: “To suppose that kind of moral excellence, which leads to higher and higher degrees of happiness, to be attainable without previous trial, may, for aught we know, be as absurd as to suppose a circle with unequal radii; and to suppose *trial* without *evil* seems to be equally absurd<sup>h</sup> :” all I contend for is, that *we* cannot *perceive* or *prove* (as Dr. King maintains we can) any thing contradictory in such a supposition; and that, *for aught we know*, such an agent might be as free as ourselves. But that there is some good reason for our not having been so constituted, though that reason is not known to us, is a doctrine in which I most humbly acquiesce. And surely it is better frankly to acknowledge our ignorance, provided we do so in patient humility, not suffering it to lead us to irre-

<sup>g</sup> Pages 60, 61.

<sup>h</sup> Copleston, p. 61.

verent objections and arrogant scepticism, than to dogmatize concerning mysteries beyond our reach; and by bewildering ourselves and others with the subtleties of logomachy, lay the foundation of incurable and most mischievous perplexity, to those who shall in time perceive the failure of our attempts to explain what we profess to regard as explicable.

There is no kind of wisdom more valuable, and unfortunately none more rare, than the right estimate of the weakness of our own faculties, and of the limits of our knowledge: nor can reason be better employed than in deciding where her operations must be stopped.

Nescire velle quæ magister optimus  
Docere non vult erudita inscitia est.

But so far are men in general from perceiving this, that they are apt to consider him as the wisest, who professes to explain the most; and him as the most ignorant, who is the most ready to confess his ignorance. And what is still more remarkable, they are usually less *offended* with one who professes to understand what they cannot, than with one who confesses his inability to understand what they profess to find intelligible. In the former case, they flatter themselves that they may hereafter understand the matter as well as he does; or that they *might* do so, if they would devote their attention to it; in the latter case, they feel galled by a sort of insinuated reproach, as if they were obliquely accused of satisfying themselves with an unsound explanation, and either stupidly overlooking, or insidiously disguising, their own ignorance.

I fully expect therefore to incur more censure from many bold explainers, than if I had advanced the most rash hypotheses, and ventured on the wildest speculations. But I

hope to have credit with the moderate and candid, (even if they think they can comprehend what I have acknowledged to be beyond my reach,) for a sincere desire at least “to prove all things, and hold fast that which is right.”

It is painful to be obliged to bring a charge of any thing like presumptuous speculation against such an author as Dr. King; whose present discourse contains perhaps the most forcible and judicious cautions against it that are any where to be found. But candour compels me to admit, that the very rules he has here so admirably laid down, are but too often transgressed throughout his Treatise on the Origin of Evil. To take one passage (and one out of many) as a specimen, let the judicious reader, who has perused the foregoing discourse, decide for himself whether the principles laid down in it are not violated by such language as the following. “We have seen in the former subsection, that some things are adapted to the appetites by the constitution of nature itself, and on that account are good and agreeable to them; but that we may conceive a power which can produce goodness or agreeableness in the things, by conforming itself to them, or adapting them to it: hence things please this agent, not because they are good in themselves, but become good because they are chosen. We have demonstrated before, how great a perfection, and of what use such a power would be; and that there is such a power in nature appears from hence, namely, we must necessarily believe that *God* is invested with it.

“II. For in the first place, nothing in the creation is either good or bad to him before his election, he has no appetite to gratify with the enjoyment of things without him. He is therefore absolutely *indifferent* to all external things, and can

neither receive benefit nor harm from any of them. What then should determine his will to act? Certainly nothing *without* him; therefore he determines himself, and creates to himself a kind of appetite by choosing. For when the choice is made, he will have as great attention and regard to the effectual procuring of that which he has chosen, as if he were excited to this endeavour by a natural and necessary appetite. And he will esteem such things, as tend to accomplish these elections, good; such as obstruct them, evil <sup>i</sup>."

It is not to the argument of the foregoing passage that I am at present wishing to call the reader's attention, but to the confident tone in which it treats of the nature and workings of the Divine mind, as if we were capable of forming distinct notions on such a subject.

The same air of confidence appears in numberless other passages of the same book; though no one has given a more judicious and forcible warning against it than the author himself. This should teach us not to rest satisfied with having merely *admitted*, once for all, but also to *keep steadily in view*, the necessity of a most reverent and trembling caution and self-distrust, when we speak of "the secret things that belong unto the Lord our God." Dr. Copleston's very just remark on the presumptuous language of another writer, is but too applicable in this case also: "the boldness with which things that the angels desire to look into, are in this manner treated, as if they were the proper subject of human argumentation, is no slight evidence of the unsoundness of those opinions which it is employed in supporting<sup>k</sup>."

The peculiar notions of Dr. King respecting *free-will*, although he builds much upon them, I have not thought fit

<sup>i</sup> Dr. King, c. v. § 1. subs. 4. p. 284.

<sup>k</sup> Copleston, p. 98.

to examine, because it appears to me, that if all he says concerning it were admitted, (keeping clear however of the ambiguity of the word "possible,") we should not be at all the nearer to a solution of the difficulty in question. Of the existence of "free-will," in the popular sense of the word, no rational doubt can be entertained: it is applied, I apprehend, to those cases where a man acts agreeably to his wishes, in contradistinction to those where he chooses the least of two evils: for instance, if a soldier puts his captives to death by the order of his commander, though he himself would rather have spared them, he is a *free agent* indeed, for he might submit to be punished himself instead of obeying; but he is said to act *against his will*: but if he exercises the same cruelty without any orders, he is said to do it of his own free-will. Dr. King however uses the term in a widely different meaning, and one to which I must confess I have never been able by the most patient attention to attach any precise sense.

But be this as it may, if this "free-will of indifference" take place only when we choose between two or more objects, of which neither has any claim to a preference;—as, for instance, which of two duplicate copies of the same book we shall read in;—then, as there is no right or wrong in the choice, this will not explain the origin of moral *evil*: but if it be contended that a man is ever led, by this free-will, to do what he knows to be wrong, without any other, or any other adequate, temptation, so far is this from explaining the difficulty, that (if we admit the fact) our astonishment is naturally increased at the existence of such a depravity of disposition as can thus prefer evil for evil's sake. But Dr. King appears to be throughout entangled in the ambiguity of the words

“possible,” &c. which he seems never clearly to have perceived, or at least not to have steadily kept in view.

I cannot dismiss the subject without a few practical remarks relative to the difficulty in question.

First, let it be remembered, that it is not peculiar to any one theological system : let not therefore the Calvinist or the Arminian urge it as an objection against their respective adversaries ; much less an objection clothed in offensive language, which will be found to recoil on their own religious tenets, as soon as it shall be perceived, that both parties are alike unable to explain the difficulty. Let them not, to destroy an opponent's system, rashly kindle a fire which will soon extend to the no less combustible structure of their own.

Secondly, let it not be supposed that this difficulty is any objection to revealed religion. Revelation leaves us, in fact, as to this question, just where it found us. Reason tells us that evil exists, and shews us in some measure how to avoid it : Revelation tells us more, of the nature and extent of the evil, and gives us better instructions for escaping it ; but why any evil at all should exist, is a question it does not profess to clear up ; and it were to be wished that its incautious advocates would abstain from representing it as making this pretension ; which is in fact wantonly to provoke such objections as they have no power to answer.

In truth, revelation cannot fairly be complained of for not solving the difficulty. Its object is manifestly not to gratify speculative curiosity, but to meet the wants and guide the conduct of believers. Now, supposing the same actual existence of evil, it does not appear how an explanation of its

origin should be requisite in order to instruct us in guarding against it. And this actual existence of evil, if admitted at all as an objection, must lie no less against natural than against revealed religion. Now the plain common sense and good principle of every right minded man will guard him against admitting it as an objection to religion universally; or at least such an objection as to justify atheistical doctrines: for,

Thirdly, our notions of the moral attributes of the Deity are not derived (as Dr. Paley contends they are <sup>1</sup>) from a bare contemplation of the created universe, without any notions of what is antecedently probable, to direct and aid our observations. Nor is it true (few indeed would now, I apprehend, assent to that part of his doctrine) that man has no moral faculty—no natural principle of preference for virtue rather than vice—benevolence rather than malice; but that being compelled by the view of the universe to admit that God is benevolent, is thence led, from prudential motives alone<sup>m</sup>, to cultivate benevolence in himself, with a view to secure a future reward. The truth I conceive is exactly the reverse of this; viz. that man having in himself a moral faculty<sup>n</sup>, or taste, as

<sup>1</sup> “The proof of the divine goodness rests upon two propositions, each, as we contend, capable of being made out by observations drawn from the appearance of nature,” &c. &c.—PALEY’S *Nat. Theol.* c. 26.

<sup>m</sup> “We conclude, therefore, that God wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures. And this conclusion being once established, we are at liberty to go on with the rule built upon it, namely, that the method of coming at the will of God, concerning any action by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or diminish the general happiness.”—PALEY’S *Moral Philosophy*, Vol. I. b. ii. c. 5. p. 79. See also c. 5. b. i. and c. 3. b. ii. of the same work.

<sup>n</sup> Whether we regard this with Dr. Butler, and Mr. D. Stewart, as an original faculty—one of the simple principles of our nature—or with A. Smith, as resulting necessarily from the original and universal principle of sympathy, is of no practical consequence in the present discussion.



some prefer to call it, by which he is instinctively led to approve virtue and disapprove vice, is thence disposed and inclined antecedently, to attribute to the Creator of the universe, the most perfect and infinitely highest of beings, all those moral (as well as intellectual) qualities which to himself seem the most worthy of admiration, and intrinsically beautiful and excellent: for to do evil rather than good, appears to all men (except to those who have been very long hardened and depraved by the extreme of wickedness) to imply something of weakness, imperfection, corruption, and degradation. I say, "*disposed and inclined*," because our admiration for benevolence, wisdom, &c. would not *alone* be sufficient to make us attribute these to the Deity, if we saw *no* marks of them in the creation; but our finding in the creation many marks of contrivance, and of beneficent contrivance, *together with* the antecedent bias in our own minds, which inclines us to attribute goodness to the supreme Being<sup>o</sup>—*both these*

° "The peculiar sentiment of approbation with which we regard the virtue of beneficence in others, and the peculiar satisfaction with which we reflect on such of our own actions as have contributed to the happiness of mankind; to which we may add, the exquisite pleasure accompanying the exercise of all the kind affections, naturally lead us to consider benevolence or goodness as the supreme attribute of the Deity.—In this manner, without any examination of the fact, we have a strong presumption for the goodness of the Deity; and it is only after establishing this presumption *a priori*, that we can proceed to examine the fact with safety. It is true indeed, that, independently of this presumption, the disorders we see would not demonstrate ill intention in the author of the universe; as it would be still possible that these might contribute to the happiness and the perfection of the whole system.—But the contrary supposition would be equally possible; that there is nothing absolutely good in the universe, and that the communication of suffering is the ultimate end of the laws by which it is governed."—STEWART'S *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, part ii. c. ii. § i. Art. ii. ¶ 287, 288, page 208.

*conjointly*, lead us to the conclusion that God is infinitely benevolent, notwithstanding the admixture of evil in his works, which we cannot account for. But these appearances of evil would stand in the way of such a conclusion, if man really were, what Dr. Paley represents him, a being destitute of all moral sentiment, all innate and original admiration for goodness: he would in that case be more likely to come to the conclusion (as many of the heathen seem actually to have done<sup>p</sup>) that the Deity was a being of a mixed or of a capricious nature; an idea which, shocking as it is to every well-constituted mind, would not be so in the least, to such a mind as Dr. Paley attributes to the whole human species. To illustrate this argument a little further, let us suppose a tasteful architect and a rude savage to be both contemplating a magnificent building, unfinished, or partially fallen to ruin; the one, not being at all able to comprehend the complete design, nor having any taste for its beauties if perfectly exhibited, would not attribute any such design to the author of it, but would suppose the prostrate columns and rough stones to be as much designed as those that were erect and perfect; the other would sketch out in his own mind something like the perfect structure of which he beheld only a part; and though he might not be able to explain how it came to be unfinished or decayed, would conclude that some such design was in the mind of the builder: though this same man, if he were contemplating a mere rude heap of stones which bore *no* marks of design at all, would not in *that* case draw such a conclusion. Or again, suppose two persons, one having an ear for music,

<sup>p</sup> In consequence, partly, of the depravation of their moral faculty, partly of the gross ignorance which kept out of their sight so much of the beneficent contrivance to be perceived in the universe.

and the other totally destitute of it, were both listening to a piece of music imperfectly heard at a distance, or half drowned by other noises, so that only some notes of it were distinctly caught, and others were totally lost or heard imperfectly; the one might suppose that the sounds he heard were all that were actually produced, and think the whole that met his ear to be exactly such as was designed; but the other would form some notion of a piece of real music, and would conclude that the interruptions and imperfections of it were not parts of the design, but were to be attributed to his imperfect hearing: though if he heard, on another occasion, a mere confusion of sounds without any melody at all, he would not conclude that any thing like music was designed.

The application is obvious: the wisdom and goodness discernible in the structure of the universe, but imperfectly discerned, and blended with evil, leads a man who has an innate approbation of those attributes, to assign them to the Author of the universe, though he be unable to explain that admixture of evil; but if man were destitute of moral sentiments, the view of the universe, such as it appears to us, would hardly lead him to that conclusion.

The defect which I have noticed in Dr. Paley's "Moral Philosophy" is now pretty generally acknowledged: but it is not so generally perceived that his "Natural Theology" is (as it could not but be) infected with the same: and that by this means he has left a flaw in that, otherwise most admirable argument.

In defence of the justness of these conclusions, which have been drawn respecting the divine benevolence, it is worth while to observe that they derive no inconsiderable weight from *Authority*; i. e. from the authority of mankind

at large, considered as rational beings. Who are those that consider their God or Gods as malevolent, or as capricious, and subject to human passions and vices? The rudest and stupidest and most degraded savages. Now we judge of what is bitter and sweet, by the taste, not of a feverish patient, but of one in the most perfect health: we call that good music, which is approved by those who have cultivated and brought to perfection the musical faculty: and we reckon *that* the proper and natural mode of growth and produce of a plant, which it exhibits, not in the *greatest number* of cases, but in the soil and climate best adapted to it, and such as are best fitted to bring it to perfection. It is without good ground therefore that the savage life is called a state of nature<sup>q</sup>, if by that expression is meant a natural state. Civilization is rather the natural state of man, since he has evidently a natural tendency towards it. And it would be most extravagant to suppose that his advance towards a more improved and exalted state of existence should tend to obliterate true and instil false notions. Those therefore must be the natural sentiments of man, which are the sentiments of *civilized* man. The Mahometan nations, who are considerably advanced in civilization, give a far more amiable representation of the Deity than the rudest Pagans: but the fullest conviction of the most sublime and perfect moral excellence in the Author of the universe, is the most

<sup>q</sup> It is remarkable that savages are so far from leading a *natural* life, that they scarcely ever suffer even the human form to attain its fair and natural proportions, but disfigure and mutilate it by some devices of their own; either compressing the skull, flattening the nose, elongating the ears, crippling the feet, or tattooing the skin, &c.—See *Lectures on Political Economy*, Lect. v.

completely established among that portion of the human race who possess the most knowledge, intelligence, and cultivation. Surely it is in this way that an appeal to the reason of mankind ought to be conducted; viz. not collecting the votes numerically, but looking to the judgment of the wisest and best: and an appeal so conducted must have very great weight with every rational mind<sup>r</sup>.

Fourthly, the doctrine of man's responsibility is not impaired but rather confirmed, by resting it, not on presumptuous explanations of the divine justice, but on its true basis, viz. first, the natural and, as it may be called, instinctive principle of conscience; which leads all men (and led even those of the heathens who thought nothing about the divine justice) to feel self-reproach, and self-approbation — an inward sense of their own ill-desert or good-desert, for certain actions, respectively, even where they have no clear expectation of punishment and reward. Secondly, the analogy of nature, so well pointed out by the great Butler; which leads us to conjecture that, as a general rule at least, virtue will always lead to the greatest share of happiness, and vice, of misery. Thirdly, and chiefly, the express declarations of Revelation; which, though it does not give any explanation *how* man comes to be responsible, is so clear as to the fact, as to leave no rational doubt in the mind of any one who believes the Scriptures<sup>s</sup>.

Lastly, let the preachers of the Gospel bear in mind that the object of that Gospel is not to explain the causes of moral evil, but to remedy its effects. Let them, after being satis-

<sup>r</sup> Elements of Rhetoric, Part I. ch. ii. § 5.

<sup>s</sup> "When this author (Edwards) asks, 'How can men know they shall be rewarded or punished in a future state but from the consideration of God's justice?' I answer confidently, we know it from the Scriptures, and we could know it in no other way."—*Copleston's Discourses*, p. 139.

fied that the Scriptures are the word of God, seek for such instruction respecting his nature, and his dealings with man, as *they* afford <sup>1</sup>. Let them remember, themselves, and sedulously warn their flocks, that it was the craving after FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE which expelled our first parents from paradise; a temptation which still besets their posterity. Let them remember, that though Scripture invites inquiry into questions within the reach of our faculties, (for our Lord bids the Jews "search the Scriptures," to ascertain whether He were indeed the foretold Messiah,) it demands faith, implicit faith, in mysteries which it does not attempt to clear up; and insists on faith as the fundamental point of religion. Let them shun those therefore who profess, by simplifying and explaining these mysteries, to make faith *easy*, and thus, in effect, to destroy the very nature of it, considered as a *duty*: for there is surely no virtue in assenting to Euclid's propositions, or any thing else which can be satisfactorily and clearly demonstrated to the understanding. Such men are in truth labouring to widen the "strait gate," that they may the more readily and agreeably enter in at it; and are guilty of much the same fault with those who turn aside from it in disgust. The latter will not believe what they find it impossible to explain; the former are resolved to explain what they find themselves compelled to believe.

<sup>1</sup> "Let us keep to Scripture; and Scripture so understood will never lead us beyond our depth. It is only by going out of Scripture, by building theories of our own upon subjects of which we must have an imperfect knowledge, that such apparent contradictions are produced. If we set up these notions of our own as the standard of faith, and require a peremptory assent to all the inferences which appear to flow from them, we quit the true, the revealed God, and betake ourselves to the idols of our own brain."—*Copleston's Discourses*, p. 141.

But let the humble and faithful ministers of Christ not seek “to be wise above that which is written,” nor rashly undertake “to justify the ways of God to man,” or give explanations which may raise pernicious doubts in the mind of one who perceives their futility: but leaving presumptuous metaphysicians to bewilder themselves in inquiries beyond the reach of our present faculties, let them teach their flocks to “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls.”

THE END.











